



## PHD

### A self study of a higher education tutor: How can I improve my practice?

Hartog, Mary

*Award date:*  
2004

*Awarding institution:*  
University of Bath

[Link to publication](#)

## Alternative formats

If you require this document in an alternative format, please contact:  
[openaccess@bath.ac.uk](mailto:openaccess@bath.ac.uk)

Copyright of this thesis rests with the author. Access is subject to the above licence, if given. If no licence is specified above, original content in this thesis is licensed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-ND 4.0) Licence (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>). Any third-party copyright material present remains the property of its respective owner(s) and is licensed under its existing terms.

### Take down policy

If you consider content within Bath's Research Portal to be in breach of UK law, please contact: [openaccess@bath.ac.uk](mailto:openaccess@bath.ac.uk) with the details. Your claim will be investigated and, where appropriate, the item will be removed from public view as soon as possible.

# **A Self Study Of A Higher Education Tutor: How Can I Improve My Practice?**

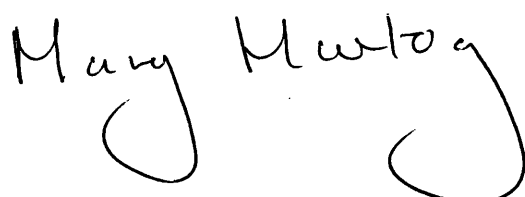
**submitted by Mary Hartog  
for the degree of Ph.D.  
at the University of Bath**

**2004**

## **COPYRIGHT**

Attention is drawn to the fact that copyright of this thesis rests with the author. This copy of the thesis has been supplied on condition that anyone who consults it is understood to recognise that its copyright rests with its author and that no quotation from the thesis and no information derived from it may be published without the prior written consent of the author.

This thesis may be made available for consultation within the University Library and may be photocopied or lent to other libraries for the purposes of consultation.

Signed:  .

UMI Number: U178480

All rights reserved

INFORMATION TO ALL USERS

The quality of this reproduction is dependent upon the quality of the copy submitted.

In the unlikely event that the author did not send a complete manuscript and there are missing pages, these will be noted. Also, if material had to be removed, a note will indicate the deletion.



UMI U178480

Published by ProQuest LLC 2013. Copyright in the Dissertation held by the Author.  
Microform Edition © ProQuest LLC.

All rights reserved. This work is protected against  
unauthorized copying under Title 17, United States Code.



ProQuest LLC  
789 East Eisenhower Parkway  
P.O. Box 1346  
Ann Arbor, MI 48106-1346

UNIVERSITY OF BATH  
LIBRARY

10 25 AUG 2004

Ph.D. ....



## **ABSTRACT**

This thesis is a self-study of a tutor in higher education committed to practice improvement. It is presented as a study of singularity and an example of first person education action research. It is epistemologically and methodologically distinct in that it is based on my values as an educator and ideas about what constitutes loving and life-affirming educational practice.

The aim of this thesis is to present a storied account of my inquiry, in which I explore what it means to live my values in practice. Through descriptions and explanations of my practice, this thesis unveils a process of action and reflection, punctuated by moments when I deny or fail to live my values fully in practice, prompting the iterative question “How do I improve my practice?”; the reflective process enabling me to better understand my practice and test out that understanding with others in the public domain.

My claim to originality is embodied in the aesthetics of my teaching and learning relationships, as I respond to the sources of humanity and educative needs of my students, as I listen to their stories and find an ethic of care in my teaching and learning relationships that contain them in good company and that returns them to their stories as more complete human beings.

Evidence is drawn from life-story work, narrative accounting, student assignments, audio and video taped sessions of teaching and learning situations, the latter of which include edited CD-R files. These clips offer a glimpse of my embodied claims to know what the creation of loving and life-affirming educative relations involves.

## **STANDARDS OF JUDGMENT**

If this Ph.D. is differentiated or distinguished as a research process, it is because its methodology is underpinned by the values I as a researcher bring to my practice.<sup>1</sup> It is with this in mind that I ask you to bring your eye as examiners to bear on the following questions, asking yourself as you read this thesis whether these questions are addressed sufficiently for you to say “yes, these standards of judgment have been met”:

- Are the values of my practice clearly articulated and is there evidence of a commitment toward living them in my practice?
- Does my inquiry account lead you to recognise how my understanding and practice has changed over time?
- Is their evidence provided of life-affirming action in my teaching and learning relationships?
- Does this thesis evidence an ethic of care in the teaching and learning relationship?
- Are you satisfied that I as researcher have shown commitment to a continuous process of practice improvement?
- Does this thesis show originality of mind and critical thinking?

Your judgment may be supported by applying the social standards of Habermas’s ‘truth claims’:

- Is this account comprehensible?
- Does it represent a truthful and sincere account?
- Is it appropriate – has it been crafted with due professional and ethical consideration?

---

<sup>1</sup> This thesis conforms to the Draft Ethical Guidelines of BERA 2003 (The British Education Research Association – see page 10 for discussion).

<b><u>Table of Contents</u></b>	<b><u>Page</u></b>
Abstract	2
Standards of Judgment	3
Acknowledgements	8
Preface	9
 <b><i>PART ONE: INTRODUCTION</i></b>	 23
 <b>CHAPTER ONE: CREATING A LIVING THEORY ACCOUNT OF MY INQUIRY</b>	 24
Introduction	24
Context, Purpose and Position	25
My Practice Context	26
Introducing My Purposes	27
Linking My Position	30
Context and Position	36
Context, Position and Purpose	38
 <b>CHAPTER TWO: APPROACH AND METHOD</b>	 41
Introduction	41
<b>Defining Action Research</b>	43
What is Emancipatory or Critical Action Research?	45
The Growth of Reflective Practice	49
A Human Conception of Educational Action Research	52
Learning to Understand the World From my Own Point of View	54
<b>I Am The Subject and Object of my Research: A Dialectical Engagement With the World</b>	59
Introduction	59
A Dialectical Engagement With the World	59
Alienation in Research	60
The Research Cycle	64
Rowan's Cycle: A Dialectical Account of my Inquiry	71
Validity in 'Educational' Action Research	80
<b>Method and Process Issues in Theory – Writing and 'Data' in This Inquiry</b>	84
Introduction	84
The Role of Theory and Literature in an Action Research Account	85
Writing as Inquiry	88
Recording Data: Using Audio and Videotapes to Gather Data	93
Reconnecting With the Data	94
Embodied Knowledge: Values in Action	96
Focusing and Drawing Out Meaning From the Data	97
Summary	99

<b>CHAPTER THREE: WOMEN'S WAYS OF KNOWING: A REVIEW AND CRITIQUE</b>	102
Introduction	103
Voice: a Metaphor for Growth and Development	107
A More detailed Understanding of the Five Perspectives	109
Contrasting the Two Procedures	119
Criticisms of <i>Women's Ways of Knowing</i>	122
Valuing Diversity or Concealing its Complexity?	123
Silence: a Negative or Positive experience?	124
'Ideal Speech' and 'Really Talking': a Different Perspective	126
Standpoint Theory: an Advantage or Disadvantage?	127
Conclusions	129
 <b>PART TWO: THE STORIES</b>	 132
 <b>CHAPTER FOUR: MAPPING THE PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL SELF -CHOICES AND SELF DETERMINATION</b>	 133
Introduction	133
Background	134
Story 1	135
Story 2	139
What Did I Learn From These Experiences?	143
How Literature Informs My Understanding of These Stories	144
Autobiography as a Vehicle For Inquiry	149
Conclusion	150
 <b>CHAPTER FIVE: FINDING VOICE IN THE ACADEMY: TOWARDS A POLITICS OF ARTICULATION, CONTESTING POWER IN THE ACADEMY FROM AN OPPOSITIONAL SITE</b>	 153
Introduction	153
The Gendered Nature of University Organisations	155
The Demands of the New Universities	156
The Historical Context of my Journey in Academia	159
The Historical Context of my Journey in Academia – Continued	163
Homeplaces	169
Working With Autobiography: Going Home	171
Conclusion	173
 <b>CHAPTER SIX: MAPOD – THE EARLY DAYS (1995-1998): A REFLECTIVE REVIEW</b>	 174
Introduction	174
Background	174
Goals for Learning on MAPOD	176
Story 1: The First MAPOD Block Week	177
Story 2: The Second Time Around	188
Story 3: Who is Spartacus?	193

How do I Understand my Practice?	198
Conclusions	206

<b>CHAPTER SEVEN: WORKING WITH MARGARET: HOW DOES MY ‘LIVING THEORY’ CONSTITUTE A DISCIPLINE OF EDUCATIONAL ACTION RESEARCH?</b>	208
Introduction	208
Background to Working with Margaret and the MAPOD Context	211
Assignment One	214
How Do I Respond? (February 1999)	219
Margaret’s Self Assessment Statement (10 March 1999)	223
Assignment Two	225
The Dissertation	233
How Does My Living Theory Constitute a Discipline of Educational Action Research?	240
Conclusion	247

<b>CHAPTER EIGHT: MATERNAL THINKING – A TRANSFORMATIVE DISCOURSE FOR EDUCATIVE RELATIONS</b>	251
Introduction: Maternal Thinking	251
What Evidence Can I Offer of What Maternal Thinking Means to Me in My Practice?	255
Background to the Second Meeting: My First Encounter With the Set in December	257
The Second Meeting (February)	259
The Assessment	266
Conclusion	272

<b>PART THREE: TOWARD A HUMANE AND CRITICAL SCHOLARSHIP OF PRACTICE</b>	275
---	-----

<b>CHAPTER NINE: DEVELOPING A CONNOISSEUR’S EYE: EXPLORING THE AESTHETICS OF MY TEACHING AND LEARNING RELATIONSHIPS ON MAPOD</b>	276
Introduction	278
In the Context of MAPOD	280
Working with Louise	289
Working with Margaret	292
Working with Marcia	294
Conclusions	297

<b>CHAPTER TEN: EDUCATING THE SOCIAL FORMATION: REFLECTING ON THE INFLUENCE OF MY LIVING THEORY INQUIRY</b>	300
Introduction	300
For Me: How Has My Living Theory Influenced and Changed My Practice?	300
To Sum Up: 'For Me'	309
For Us: Making a Difference	311
Organising Reflection as a Critique to Practice	313
To Sum Up: For 'Us' Making a Difference	319
For Them: How Can we Create a Good Social Order in Higher Education?	320
A Unified Approach to Teaching, Learning and Research	326
To Sum Up: 'For Them' Where to From Here?	329
Conclusion	330
 <b>END PIECE</b>	332
Introduction	332
Key Themes of This Thesis	332
Finding Voice	333
Women's Ways of Knowing and the Maternal Voice	334
Listening: The Other Side of Silence	335
Community Building: Learning in Good Company	335
Making a Difference	336
 <b>APPENDIX 1: PAPER PRESENTED 1 JUNE 2001 AT EBEN-UK CONFERENCE – DRAFT WORKING PAPER IN PREPARATION FOR FUTURE PUBLICATION</b>	338
 <b>APPENDIX 2: INSTRUCTIONS FOR USE OF THE CD-R</b>	362
 <b>REFERENCES AND BIBLIOGRAPHY</b>	364

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

I would like to thank Jack Whitehead my supervisor for his support and belief in me throughout this research journey.

In addition, my husband Richard for his perseverance, and my colleagues for their encouragement.

Last but not least, my students, in particular, Louise and Margaret from MAPOD 4, and Marcia and Nigel from MAPOD 5, whose participation in my inquiry has been significant to the development of this thesis. They have been my teachers.

## **PREFACE**

### **Summary**

This thesis presents an account of a self-study of a tutor in higher education, as a study of singularity. It should be read because it offers a distinctive and original contribution to the new scholarship of teacher research in which the educative values of the practitioner provide the basis for the construction of a living educational theory.

The thesis has been constructed as a narrative account contained in stories which offer descriptions and explanations of my lived experience as a tutor working with postgraduate students on a Masters degree in Personal and Organisational Development.<sup>2</sup>

This thesis needed to be undertaken for a number of reasons. Firstly, for me, as a vehicle for inquiry for the purpose of improving my practice and in order that I might learn how to live my values more fully in my practice. Secondly, for my students, in order that they might experience a life-affirming and transformative educational experience, one in which they might claim the integrity of their minds and find their voice to make a difference in their professional and organisational spheres. Finally, for the academy, so that this contribution, drawn from the lived experience of an H.E. tutor committed to practice improvement and as a study of singularity, might be recognised as a valid and legitimate contribution to academic knowledge, and as an exemplar of first person educational action research.

My original contribution to knowledge, illuminated by visual representation and described in my narrative account, points to the aesthetics of embodied

---

<sup>2</sup> Hereinafter 'MAPOD'.



knowledge in my teaching and learning relationships, showing how I am touched by the fundamentals of what it means to be human, as I respond to the sources and needs of my students, and as I listen to and return them to their stories as more complete human beings, containing them in good company in the process.

In the process of improving my practice, I have moved towards an ethic of care in my teaching and learning relationships. This position is significant to this thesis and in the crafting of my connoisseur's eye, drawing on the tacit dimension and the artistry of my emergent practice. As part of this ethic of care, I have been mindful of the ethics of constructing this thesis. In particular, I have paid regard to the draft ethical guidelines of BERA<sup>3</sup> (2003), for the conduct of this piece of educational action research. Specifically, with regard to my responsibility to participants, I have ensured that I have informed consent to the participation and the disclosure of material pertaining to individual students whose work and stories are shared within this thesis. Furthermore, I have endeavoured to protect the confidentiality of others who might prefer not to be named or to be such active participants in my inquiry. I am particularly indebted to those students who gave me permission to video and tape record my work with them and who gave me permission to quote extensively from their work.

This thesis is presented in three parts:

- Part One: Introduction.
- Part Two: The stories.
- Part Three: Toward a humane and critical scholarship of practice.

In Part One, I frame my thesis, outlining my context, purpose and position. I provide an account of my approach and method, and identify a body of literature

---

<sup>3</sup> The British Educational Research Association.

that has informed my thinking and provided a synthesis of ideas integrated into my own living theory. Part Two consists of five stories that provide descriptive and explanatory accounts of cycles of my inquiry. These include a life story, an account of my lived experience as a woman in academia, and three practice-specific stories of my work and inquiry with students on the MAPOD programme. The final section of the thesis, Part Three, includes two chapters and an end piece. These chapters serve to move my inquiry on, providing an analysis and perspective of what it means to create loving and life-affirming educative relations and draws on an alternative form of visual representation to illuminate those insights. The final chapter returns to the three key stakeholders in this thesis, namely, myself, my students and the wider academy, and examines the lessons learned through this inquiry for these stakeholders, identifying the issues that need to be addressed in educating the social formation of the academy and the role and contribution of the new scholarship in this regard. The end piece draws the thesis to a close.

## **Part One: Introduction**

### *Chapter One: Creating a Living Theory Account of my Inquiry*

In this chapter I frame my thesis as a self-study of my practice as a form of ‘educational action research’. I begin by outlining what ‘living theory’ (Whitehead, 1989) means. I identify my practice context as a higher education tutor working in a business school. I state my purposes and intention to improve the rationality and justice of my practice, and outline the goals of my research to construct a humane practice based on an image of graceful and reciprocal educative relations. I present my position drawn from the values that I bring to my practice and which I clarify in the course of this inquiry, and account for my approach as one that broadly draws on and is informed by humanistic, feminist

and critical qualities of inquiry. Specifically, I begin to construct a frame for my originality of mind.

## *Chapter Two: Approach and Method*

This chapter is presented in three sections. I present an account of my approach and method that engages reflectively with the work of others and, in particular, draws on ideas that are at the forefront of thinking in educational action research, embracing alternative forms of representation that serve to enhance a narrative account. As I work with ideas that are humanistic, feminist and critical, I craft the uniqueness of my approach to the self-study of my practice, finding a way forward through cycles of action and reflection that lead me toward the emergence of my connoisseur's eye and discipline of practice that facilitates the creation of loving and life-affirming educative relations.

In the first section of this chapter, 'defining action research', I begin with the legacy of Lewin's (1946) rational scientific social research and experiments in social change as an attempt to facilitate democracy. I then explore the relevance of a critical and emancipatory approach to action research and draw on critiques that expose the pretensions that a critical approach can eliminate distortions or power. Following this, I address the growing popularity of reflective practice as a means of inquiry in action research, and similarly urge caution toward unquestioning claims for reflective practice.

I conclude this section with an account of McNiff's (1999) conception of action research as a distinctly human endeavour, where individuals act with the best interests of others at heart. This other path is one which MacDonald describes as:

"a process of locating one's centre in relation to the other: to 'see' one's self and the other in relation to our centres of being; to touch and be touched by another in terms of something fundamental to our human existence" (1995:95).

Finally, I highlight the significance of personal knowledge in research, drawing on Polanyi (1962). It is this personal knowledge in the tacit dimension that ultimately leads me toward the crafting of my connoisseur's eye and the discovery of the aesthetics of my practice in the conduct of this research.

The second section is entitled 'I am the subject and object of my research: a dialectical engagement with the world'. In presenting my 'I' as the subject and object of my research, I further frame my inquiry in the form of 'a dialectical engagement with the world', concerned with passionate knowing and educative change, drawing on Rowan's (1981) dialectical paradigm for human inquiry. In constructing this account, I draw on McNiff's (1988) principles and practice of action research and Eames' (1993) account of a dialectical form of action research based on educational knowledge given from his own perspective as a teacher-researcher, and of his understanding of the shared characteristics between the action research cycle and dialectical logic. I further develop my appreciation of Whitehead's (1989) conception of 'I' as a living contradiction contained within the creation of a living educational theory and his subsequent development of these ideas (Whitehead, 1993).<sup>4</sup> Additionally, I draw on Coulter and Weins (2002), whose conception of teaching includes embodied knowledge that draws on virtue, reason and judgment, a perspective inspired by Arendt who asks in her writings about the Holocaust "what it means to be a judging actor?" and "what it means to be a judging spectator?". Finally, I draw on Lomax's (1994) professorial inaugural lecture to clarify what makes educational research valid.

The third section is 'Method and process issues in theory, writing and data in this inquiry'. Here I address key issues pertaining to an action research approach,

---

<sup>4</sup> In *The Growth of Educational Knowledge*.

starting with the role of theory and literature in action research as a responsive and generative force drawn from a synthesis of values and understanding in response to practical action. I then explore the process of writing this inquiry, its role in the emergence of an action inquiry, its function of sense-making for my inquiry and as a way of knowing, with particular reference to the role of life story in the construction of my thesis. Next, I explore my process of data gathering and meaning making, drawing on oral and visual data in respect of my teaching and learning relationships with students on the MAPOD programme. Specifically, I address the visual form of representation, the purpose of which has enabled me to see the living form of my practice and which I draw on later in this thesis to show you moments in my practice in which I am inquiring in action and crafting my connoisseur's eye with the purpose of creating loving and life-affirming educative relations.

### *Chapter Three: Women's Ways of Knowing: A Review and Critique*

In this chapter I aim to provide a review and critique of *Women's Ways of Knowing* (Belenky *et al.*, 1986). The ideas that this book has given rise to are especially relevant to this thesis, having informed my thinking and provided a synthesis of ideas that I have integrated within my own living theory. Ideas such as the maternal voice and connected teaching serve to highlight ways of knowing that women have traditionally valued and cultivated, the influence of these ideas helping me move toward an ethic of care in my teaching and learning relationships. Having described the research study that gives rise to the five perspectives of knowing presented by the authors, I discuss the perspectives in relation to my own lived experience and the development of my own sense of self, voice and mind. Engaging with these ideas has enabled me to embrace the pieces of myself as I have searched for my own unique and authentic voice in the course of this inquiry.

## **Part Two: The Stories**

### *Chapter Four: Mapping the Personal and Professional Self: Choices and Self Determination*

In this chapter I present and reflect on two life stories, or rather events in my life, which are in part about choices and self-determination. I have included these stories in my thesis because I believe personal inquiry offers a perspective for self-study that may help us see possible links between our present and past preoccupations; in particular, between the personal and professional self. This perspective pointed me toward the source and development of my sense of self, voice and mind. Sharing and placing this account in the public domain may help others engaged with this type of reflective inquiry to better understand the journey from silence to voice.

Following the stories, I subject them to analysis and critique drawing on Belenky *et al.* (1986). I then explore autobiography as a vehicle for inquiry. What is distinctive about my account is that I present these stories and my analysis holistically, whereas the findings presented by Belenky *et al.* are fragments of individual life stories. Fragments, by contrast, do not allow us to see the whole picture that frames the quest or meaning of a life for an individual, or to see or trace the events that lead to change and transformation.

Such stories draw out the impact of stories we live by and are an important part of any personal inquiry process.

### *Chapter Five: Finding Voice in the Academy*

Whilst the previous chapter told stories from a personal perspective, this chapter tells one from both a personal and professional perspective, as I explore the

experience of finding voice in the academy as a woman within a new university and higher education sector. In so doing, I develop a critique of the academy, the context for my educative practice. Like hooks (1991),<sup>5</sup> I take up a position on the margins as a 'site of resistance'. I explore the gendered nature of universities, the demands of the new university sector, and describe the historical context of my journey in academia. Additionally, I describe how new universities are being repositioned as part of a global economy and I explore the implications of this for higher education.

This review and critique of the wider context is important to this thesis because firstly, it highlights political and ethical implications for the future of higher education itself. Secondly, it indicates how an alternative voice may offer a site of resistance by bringing knowledge from a different voice into the academy and creating 'public homeplaces' (Belenky, 1996) in higher education at a time when current policy is focused on education as an economic transaction and a site for knowledge exchange. Finally, it enables the educational action researcher, through critique of the wider system, to speak truth to power, and tell it like it is.

### *Chapter Six: MAPOD - The Early Days (1995-1998): A Reflective Review*

In this chapter I review the reflective process of my inquiry as a higher education tutor in the context of my educative relations on the MAPOD programme, by reviewing the early days of the programme, spanning the life of the first two cohorts in the period 1995 to 1998. I do this by telling three stories.

These stories are important to this thesis, firstly because getting to grips with what self-study involves is a story worth sharing, particularly with other educational action research novices. We are, I suggest, conditioned to see the

---

<sup>5</sup> Note that this is the preferred spelling of this author.

world from the outside, rather than looking from the inside out. Therefore, the process of learning to place the 'I' at the centre of one's inquiry may require a radical shift of mind.

Secondly, the stories reveal the educative values that underpinned the MAPOD and describe the strategies employed to put them into practice. They also reveal the power complexes involved.

The first story explores the values aspired to, lived out and denied in practice. It further reveals underlying tensions and contradictions involved, fuelled by anxieties and a subconscious fear concerned with a loss of control and power. The second story shows how learning from experience can enable finding a way forward and the realisation of values in practice, where previously those values were denied. The third story explores the dynamics of power and the potential for adversarial power relations creating a stand-off between the parties in terms of 'them and us'. It also explores the emotional intensity involved in creating an alternative site for learning, and it shows how the journey became a metaphor for hope and survival during this action inquiry.

#### *Chapter Seven: Working with Margaret: How Does my 'Living Theory' Constitute a Discipline of Educational Action Research?*

In this chapter I present an account of three short stories of working with Margaret, a student on the fourth MAPOD cohort, during the period from 1998 to 2001. These stories are important to this thesis, because they show how my living theory helped constitute a discipline of educational action research in my practice. They also demonstrate a shift in my attention from the general educative focus to the particular, exploring what it means to create loving and life-affirming educative relations for an individual student.



The stories are based around three assignments when I worked with Margaret as the tutor facilitator of the action learning set she was in. Each assignment represents a distinct spiral in a cycle of action research in which I *plan* to facilitate my students' learning.

### *Chapter Eight: Maternal Thinking - a Transformative Discourse for Educative Relations*

In the previous chapter, my inquiry led me toward an ethic of care in the teaching and learning relationship. In this chapter, I build upon that ethic by drawing on the idea of maternal thinking as a heuristic device in the service of reflecting on and improving my practice. I begin by reviewing the literature of maternal thinking and then explore the practical application of this idea to my practice. The time-frame of the case example given is 1999, which overlaps with the period when I was working with Margaret.

Maternal thinking is important to this thesis because it is a form of strategic action, which provides a reflective process that can change the practice itself, as in action research. It causes us to question our perceptions and assumptions about what it means to care enough for our students, and how to hold the paradox effectively between feedback and judgment in the academic relationship. This story represents the next cycle of inquiry in my research.

## **Part Three: Toward a Humane and Critical Scholarship of Practice**

### *Chapter Nine: Developing a Connoisseur's Eye: Exploring the Aesthetics of my Teaching and Learning Relationships on MAPOD*

This chapter addresses my process of doing and knowing. It is about showing you my values in action, captured by a visual form of representation, as well as

accounting for myself in narrative form. It is important for curriculum educational action research, because image-based representation captures the dialectical form and can show the meaning of values such as respect, compassion and affirmation; in other words, it can illuminate the embodied nature of my values that constitute loving and life-affirming educational practice. As a form of representation it is significant because it expands the constraints of narrative-based accounting. Furthermore, it points to the tacit dimension and underlying aesthetic qualities of knowing that shapes one's emergent artistry and educative connoisseurship, extending the possibilities for our understanding beyond the cognitive realm in respect of doing and being in educative relations.

Whilst much has been written about the process of action learning, the role of the set to provide support and challenge, and the idea of peers as comrades in adversity (Revans, 1971), little has been written about the process and purpose of conducting a reflective learning conversation. In this regard, I draw on ideas in constructivist and interpretivist approaches to human inquiry (Schwandt, 1994) as a means to help me construct and explain the qualities of my own 'living theory' (Whitehead, 1989) as embodied in my practice. I explain how I facilitate a reflective learning conversation that reveals the quest for clarity and coherence of stories told, the role of the facilitator in the dialogic creation of new narratives through inquiry, and the collaborative process of co-authoring that takes place within this hermeneutic circle of meaning making. I illustrate my account with three examples of working with particular students, drawing on visual representation.

Significantly, in this chapter I aim to test my claim to originality described in my abstract as embodied in the aesthetics of my teaching and learning relationships, as I learn to respond to the humanity of my students and their educative needs, listen to their stories and find an ethic of care that contains them in good company, returning them to their stories as more complete human beings.

## *Chapter Ten: Educating the Social Formation: Reflecting on the Influence of my Living Theory Inquiry*

In this chapter I reflect on the challenge of educating the social formation and transforming the educative sphere. I do this by reflecting on the influence of my living theory inquiry, by asking what difference this has made to both my practice and that of my students. In addition, I ask the question “How can we create a good social order in the field of higher education?”. The theme of this chapter is making a difference, which I explore through the eyes of the three key stakeholders to my inquiry as defined by Reason and Marshall (1987), who identify stakeholders of the personal process of human inquiry as me, us and them.

I begin with a review and critique of my inquiry, reflecting on what difference this has made for me. I conclude that I have developed the know-how and ability to articulate my educative values within a framework of an ethic of care in the teaching and learning relationship, and I suggest that this aspect of my thesis offers an original contribution to knowledge in that it goes beyond invoking the need for moral reasoning, by showing how, through a discipline of educational action inquiry, we can develop our ethical awareness of the other.

Next, I explore what difference this has made for us (my students), by summarising two student exemplars, showing how they developed their work within an ethical framework. This is important to my thesis because it contributes to our understanding of how reflection can be organised in the teaching and learning relationship to have a transformative effect, and one that serves to reconstruct personal and professional identities for the purposes of critique and change to practice, revealing in the process universal stories of oppression.

Finally, for them, I ask the question “How might we create a good social order in the academy?”. I do this by drawing on the work of Hannah Arendt, by exploring the consequences of separating teaching and research, and the management and process of learning. This review and critique is important to this thesis, because it exposes how current policy and practice in higher education undermines the very purpose of education itself. It frames the fundamental challenge facing the academy today and the imperative of educating the social formation, to which this thesis makes a contribution.

### *End Piece*

The end piece serves to draw this thesis to a close.

### *Appendix 1: Critical Action Learning: Towards Best Practice in the Teaching of Business Ethics*

Included in this appendix is the above paper, originally written in 2001.<sup>6</sup> It was later submitted to *The Journal of Reflective Practice* for consideration, and has now been accepted for publication with some amendments during 2004.

In this paper, I seek to explore the case for ‘critical action learning’ (Willmott, 1994) as a ‘best practice’ intervention strategy for the teaching and learning of business ethics for management and professional development. In doing so, I draw on my own practice of applying this approach to the teaching of ethics in business and professional practice with my own students on the part-time MAPOD programme.

---

<sup>6</sup> Originally presented to The European Business Ethics – UK Conference on Teaching Business Ethics, City University, 1 June 2001.

Anthony's critique (1998),<sup>7</sup> resonated with the approach that I had been developing on MAPOD, hitherto informally guided by the issues that students had brought to action learning sets. Avoiding any 'prescriptive' educational endeavour, Anthony suggests we should look to our students to guide us, by helping them draw out and learn from real-life work-based issues that go to the heart of the matter, asking the question "What is the nature of the ethical problem here?".

His position that managers are moral agents, coupled with Willmott's stance on what distinguishes a critical approach to action learning from a traditional approach, helped me find a way forward that challenged the ethical neutrality of our action learning interventions, enabling students to challenge the status quo, formalising and legitimising such critique within a body of legitimate knowledge, namely 'critical management theory'.

The reason for including this paper here is because it is relevant to my thesis. It helped me to shift the management learning agenda on MAPOD beyond the individual manager (student practitioner), to one that is interdependent with the well-being and learning of society at large. Moreover, it helped me to integrate and better understand how I could be in educative relations with my students and hold together in the dialectical tradition both a humanistic, feminist and critical perspective in order that I might better live my values in practice. In Chapter Ten,<sup>8</sup> I draw on the ideas presented in this paper and show how they have influenced my inquiry.

---

<sup>7</sup> A chapter entitled "Management education: ethics versus morality".

<sup>8</sup> Entitled "Educating the social formation: reflecting on the influence of my living theory".

## ***PART ONE: INTRODUCTION***

# **CHAPTER ONE: CREATING A LIVING THEORY ACCOUNT OF MY INQUIRY**

## **Introduction**

The purpose of this chapter is to introduce my research, and frame my thesis, as a self-study of my practice as a form of 'Educational Action Research'. I will begin by outlining what 'living theory' (Whitehead, 1989) means in the context of a study of singularity, and account for my approach as one that broadly draws on and is informed by humanistic, feminist and critical qualities of inquiry.

The self-study of teachers as a form of educational action research has emerged in recent years as a growing discipline of inquiry, in reaction to the tradition of social scientist coming into classrooms to do research on pupils and teachers. Social science research in education is based on the disciplines of education such as psychology and sociology, resulting in theory presented in propositional form. Whitehead (1989:42) claims that the propositional form "masks the living form" which in its own right can generate valid descriptions and explanations of an educators practice and development. Without denying the importance of the propositional theory, Whitehead argues for a "reconstruction of educational theory into a living form of question and answer", which may include ideas drawn from propositional theory but which exist not as a stand alone proposition but within the explanations given by practitioners of their practice, characterised by questions of the kind, 'How do I improve my practice?'

Zeichner describes the approach to studying one's own practice as "the new scholarship" (1999:11). Discussing what makes a discipline of inquiry, Lomax states:

“the idea of a discipline is distinguished by the ways of thinking, theorising, practicing or enquiring which constitute the thing itself... The discipline of educational Inquiry is epistemologically and methodologically distinct from social science because it includes the values which constitute the idea of ‘educational’” (Lomax, 1994:4).

McNiff (1999) challenges the adequacy of the established view of science that offers descriptions of nature as value free, without consideration of ethics or moral intent, and which places the scientist on the outside of the field of investigation, without any regard for personal engagement, as though he does not influence the field in any way. Arguing that ‘new science’ such as complexity theory has moved on, McNiff suggests that:

“It is time for the social sciences to catch up, and for educational research, both as an art and a science, to point the way in which existence might be understood and expressed at the level of lived experience – a form of living theory (Whitehead, 1993) that shows the reality of flesh and blood people in relation with each other and the earth that supports them”. [Furthermore, McNiff argues that] Methodology is more than a method... *including* the values and attitudes that the researcher brings to her work” (McNiff, 1999).

## **Context, Purpose and Position**

### *A context for my inquiry*

The context for my research and practice is my role as an educational practitioner, as a tutor in higher education at a new university, namely Middlesex University Business School.<sup>9</sup> Specifically, I focus on my practice on the MA in Personal and Organisational Development (MAPOD), a part-time Masters degree for practitioner managers, with a range of professional backgrounds working in both the private and public sectors. The common feature in their backgrounds is that their organisational roles include a specific responsibility for the development of people and the organisation. My work is located in a

---

<sup>9</sup> Hereinafter ‘MUBS’.



Business School, the context of which is significant both culturally and politically to my inquiry. It is more than background to my inquiry, since it influences, shapes and constrains the educative purpose and relations of my practice. The context of my practice is thus subject to critique in this thesis, as well as my practice itself. For example, notwithstanding specific points of critique that emerge about context through the thesis, in Chapter Five I subject context to critical scrutiny in respect of my lived experience as a women academic. I return again to address the significance of context in Chapter Ten, as I explore the challenges of educating and changing the social formation of the academy.

### **My Practice Context**

The MAPOD is a two-year block release programme designed to support the process of reflective and critical practice for experienced practitioners who, in their professional roles, influence the learning of people and organisations. The course is designed as a modular programme with each module having a theme.

In year one the modular themes are ‘personal learning and support strategies’, ‘research’, and ‘organisational learning’. In year two the modular themes are ‘the role of the change agent’ and a dissertation which explores questions of either personal or organisational learning, or their mutual relationship. Additionally, at the end of year one, students are required to write a reflective account of their learning, and midway through the second year they are required to produce a portfolio reflecting on their experience of working together on the programme as a learning community.

The modules are not taught or tutor centred in the traditional sense; rather, the content is designed and delivered collaboratively with students. Both tutors and students make offers of sessions appropriate to the broad modular themes and in

response to perceived needs of the group. Whilst the lead initially may come from the tutors, this becomes more of a co-operative venture as students individually and collectively develop the skills to direct their learning, as they deem appropriate. This is achieved by an overarching design that is process driven, where we work together in the residential setting on the task of building and creating a learning community.

In between the residential blocks of three to five days (on average totalling fifteen days per year), we meet by mutual agreement in small groups known as action learning sets of approximately five people per set, where students progress individual written work for assessment, based on accounts of live work issues and projects related to the modules. The students learn through the reflective process in the action learning sets to critique their own practice knowledge and their working theories, and they explore the ideas of others through literature, from which they draw a new synthesis for practice. The sets are tutor facilitated and the assessment process includes self, peer and tutor feedback.

### **Introducing My Purposes**

My primary purpose is to improve the rationality and justice of my own practice, but what does this mean? When I began this inquiry I held an aesthetic sense of what might constitute careful and competent learning facilitation, which I could not then describe or explain. Rather, I held an image of educative practice that was contained in graceful and reciprocal educative relations that served to uphold the humanity of personhood. Heron (1992), in his theory of the person, presents in the first instance four modes of the psyche, 'the affective', embracing feeling and emotion; 'the imaginal', the capacity of the psyche to generate an individual viewpoint, a unique outlook on life through the use of imagery; 'the conceptual', including reflection and discrimination; and 'the practical' mode, concerned with intention and action. These modes are linked to four forms of

knowledge, the experiential (affective), the presentational (the imaginal), the propositional (conceptual), and the practical. He presents this model as a hierarchy in which the person is established as a distinct focus of experience.

I have come to appreciate that qualities of graceful conduct in respect of improving the rationality and justice of my practice in my teaching and learning relationships, although at first dimly apprehended, have emerged over time in response to the needs of my students. In so doing, I have clarified my values in practice in the context of specific learning relationships. It is this emergence in response to the particular that also leads me to suggest that my students have shown me what rationality and justice can mean for my practice, in the context of our specific learning relations as I responded to their humanity, and when I failed in my efforts, to live my values as espoused in my teaching and learning relationships with them.

In Chapter Nine, I aim to show how this inquiry has enabled me to come to see how my embodied knowledge responds to the needs of students and how it has facilitated a realisation of my purposes, to improve the rationality and justice of my practice. I do this by showing through video data what my practice looks like when I am *doing* in response to the needs of my students and *being* in ‘graceful’ and reciprocal educative relations with them. By embodied knowledge, I mean that my educative practice contains an embodied evaluation of past actions and an intention to improve in the process of living learning relationships.

McNiff (1999) suggests that some things defy definition, in particular acts of love, care and compassion, which McNiff claims ‘speak for themselves’. She further argues that we are in danger of “losing the awesome wonder of life as experience” (1999) if we try to pin it down within the limits of a narrative account. In my effort to show you how I respond to values of humanity within my teaching and learning relationships and in my curriculum theorising, I invite

you to engage (in the above mentioned chapter) in an alternative form of representation based on visual images of teaching and learning relationships with specific students. Eisner (1997) suggests that alternative forms of representation, such as poetic or visual forms, can express what words alone cannot convey. These images are thus combined with narrative accounts as an attempt to show and explain more clearly the reality of lived experience as I work toward living my values more fully in practice.

I began my inquiry in the context of MAPOD by identifying values of student autonomy in learning, based upon the belief that one of the goals of education is to encourage students to think for themselves. I also identified valuing the experience that students bring with them to the teaching and learning relationship as important, thus acknowledging that tutors were not the only ones with expertise. I then linked to this an approach to teaching, learning and curriculum design based on more open, equal and democratic relations than those usually found in the education system, in order to give students the opportunity to experience a greater degree of freedom in their learning. These values and beliefs are informed by a humanistic approach to educative relations, as in the work of Rogers (1983), whose ideas of student-centred self directed learning, learning from experience, the importance of self evaluation in learning and the role of the tutor as empathetic facilitator, all played a part in the shared understanding of the tutor team and our initial conception of the MAPOD programme. Rogers eschews the politics of 'jug and mug' education, where the student is but a passive recipient and he calls on educators to help their students learn how to learn. He cites:

"We are, in my view, faced with an entirely new situation in education where the goal of education, if we are to survive, is the *facilitation of change and learning*. The only man who is educated is the man who has learned how to learn; the man who has learned how to adapt and change; the man who has realised that no knowledge is secure, that only the process of *seeking* knowledge gives a basis for security. Changingness, a reliance

on *process* rather than upon static knowledge, is the only thing that makes any sense as a goal for education in the modern world” (Rogers, 1983:120), original emphasis.

Humanistic values for education and learning remain central to my living theory. However, during the course of this inquiry they have become clarified and enriched by feminist and critical thinking, helping me pursue more effectively my purpose of rationality and justice in my teaching and learning relationships - addressing questions of the kind ‘How do I improve my practice?’ This enhancement to my values and my living theory is explained in the accounts given in this thesis.

### **Linking My Position**

This inquiry is a self-study of my practice, located within the field of Educational Action Research and this thesis is constructed as a living theory account. Whitehead (1993) suggests that educational practitioners develop a conception of ‘what works’ drawn from their practice experience. Of course, this might include ideas or beliefs about educational practice drawn from theories of education, which educators can apply or draw into their practice. The idea that we may come to know ourselves as a ‘living contradiction’ involves experiencing a gap between the values that we espouse about our practice and our experience of it; in other words, when we notice there is a contradiction between what we say (or claim) and what we do. Whitehead suggests that when we notice ourselves as ‘living contradictions’ we imagine a way forward through which we may resolve this tension and improve our practice, thus learning to live our values more fully in our practice.

The values that I as an educator bring to my practice are the very yardsticks by which the integrity of my research can be measured. They can be found in the descriptions and explanations I offer about my practice within this thesis, and in

my claims of professional development given, in the progress of this inquiry account.

Of particular concern to me are questions of coherence and authenticity. Are my descriptions and explanations clear and are they sufficiently coherent with respect to the values that I espouse? Does the evidence presented in my descriptions and explanations bear out the claims that I make? In other words, is my account authentic? These are important questions of validity which are reflected in the standards of judgment I have presented in the preface, and which I believe are appropriate to judge the quality of the claims to know made in this thesis.

This self-study has been conducted as a systematic discipline of action and reflection in which cycles and spirals of inquiry have enabled the research to evolve. Becoming a reflective practitioner has formed one such spiral of my inquiry, as I have developed skills of reflection and a critique to my own practice. From Hartog (2002),<sup>10</sup> I identified nine key values lived out and aspired to in my practice. I present and describe them as follows:

---

<sup>10</sup> Entitled 'Becoming a reflective practitioner: a continuing professional development strategy through humanistic action research'.

<b><i>Becoming a Reflective Practitioner: Nine Key Values lived out and aspired to in my practice.</i></b>	
1.	Listening and learning to hear.
2.	A quality of mindfulness.
3.	Appreciating and valuing my 'maternal voice' in teaching and learning relationships.
4.	Developing an ethics of care in my teaching and learning relationships.
5.	Treating my students as whole persons.
6.	Developing an educative practice of 'connected teaching'.
7.	Valuing the emotional as well as the cognitive processes of learning.
8.	Being critical a) of authority and b) of tradition.
9.	Linking education and democracy.

***(1) Listening and learning to hear*** with a quality of attention to self and others that a process of self-reflexive inquiry supports, turning the mirror inward to engage with the 'other' in the teaching and learning relationship. I may be holding my students metaphorically, individually and/or collectively in an educative space in which they are 'heard' as persons, both by their peers and myself, as they grapple with their learning, and learn to 'hear' and know themselves better in the process.

***(2) A quality of mindfulness*** attentive to my own thoughts and projects and at the same time, the needs of my students. When I work in this way, I am undoubtedly doing my best work. I am engaged in a process of reflection in practice that is deeply attuned to their needs and process as learners 'in the moment', and to my own, as I seek to facilitate their learning and the learning relationship we create together. Tremmel (in Zeichner and Liston, 1996:18) likens this quality of reflective practice to the Zen Buddhist practice of 'mindfulness'. He suggests that this involves both an attention to the situation

and to oneself "...to pay attention to right here, right now, and to invest in the present moment with full awareness and mindfulness".

Mindfulness has some similarity to what Schön (1983) referred to as 'reflection in practice', what he described as the process of framing and attempting to solve problems on the spot. The qualities of mindfulness are, I would argue, special in that they denote a particular quality of attention in the midst of action.

I am fortunate to have had mindful moments of reflective practice in the context for my practice as programme leader and tutor on the MAPOD. It is a context which has afforded me the opportunity of living my values more fully in my practice as an educator, particularly those of student centred learning and community building in the learning relationship. These values are, in turn, embedded and flow from a philosophy and practice for this programme grounded in beliefs of democratic principles in education, lived out through practices in the teaching and learning relationship such as self and peer assessment as well as tutor assessment.

**(3) *Appreciating and valuing my 'maternal voice' in teaching and learning relationships*** with my students and caring about them as persons who are engaged in their own learning journeys and developmental processes.

**(4) *Developing an ethics of care in my teaching and learning relationships***, thus nurturing my aspiring image of self as educator, as one caring. The concept of the maternal voice (Noddings cited in Belenky *et al.*, 1986:214) which I have employed in my research has enabled me to inquire into what I need to do to develop an ethic of care in my practice and has helped me clarify my position as a feminist critical educator.

"The ethical self is an active relation between my actual self and a vision of my ideal self as one-caring and cared-for. It is



born of the fundamental recognition of relatedness; that which connects me naturally to the other, reconnecting me through the other to myself” (Noddings, 1984:49).

When we behave as one caring it is not a question of obeying moral principle, though that may be a part of it, but rather we are “meeting the other in a genuine encounter of caring and cared for” (Noddings, 1984:175). This is a ‘choiceful’ act, she argues, which can either enhance or diminish us as one caring.

*(5) Treating my students as whole persons* is an aspect of my aspiring self, engaging with them in respect of their cognitive and emotional needs as learners.

*(6) Developing an educative practice of ‘connected teaching’*, where I am seeking to ‘get alongside’ my students to understand them first as people, so that I might understand their perspective. Using the metaphor of ‘teacher as midwife’, Belenky *et al.* (1986:217) describes this practice as “connected teaching”. I am purposefully inquiring with my ability to engage with my students as one caring. I emphasise this principle, as a senior lecturer working in higher education, working in the context of a business school.

My experience is that such a stance toward an ‘ethic of practice’ for a professional educator is a challenge, since the order of the academy is essentially an androcentric one, privileging the masculine qualities of knowing, in the form of reason and logic and denying, or at best ignoring, the more feminine qualities of connected knowing.

*(7) Valuing the emotional as well as the cognitive processes of learning*, whereby anyone who has worked in a business school will appreciate that the emphasis is placed on the rational cognitive processes of learning, in terms of knowledge acquisition and little or no reference is made to the emotional process

in 'management learning'. By contrast, MAPOD set out to engage the whole person.

**(8) *Being critical a) of authority and b) of tradition***, and by adopting this stance I am seeking to challenge the status quo. Two of the aspects of being critical, as identified by Mingers (2000:227), are the critique of authority (that being the dominant or privileged viewpoint) and the critique of tradition (that being the taken for granted assumptions about the way things are done around here, which tend to be inherently cultural). In challenging the status quo, I do this both in my educative relations with students and also by explicitly placing emotionality on the agenda, for example, by raising the link between anxiety and learning and working with it in the assessment process, and by explicitly addressing emotions and organisations within the wider curriculum. More specifically, I have through my inquiry, developed a critique of my practice and myself as a reflective practitioner.

**(9) *Linking education and democracy*** - the critical stance of the course does have an influence on the working practices of the students and, in turn, they question practices in their own organisations, thus bringing a degree more humanity, democratisation and ethical practice to the workplace. Thus, I attempt to link the fundamental purposes of education 'as democracy' through my practice to the wider concerns of organisation and society at large.

Additionally, I engage in activities which serve to reflect on my practice. Schön (1983) refers to these as the activities and disciplines of planning and evaluation. Most significantly, however, at the heart of my practice is the recurring question: 'How do I live my values well in my practice'? The articulation of my values has become clearer through the process of this inquiry, growing out of the image of a practice of 'good grace' into concrete responses to the needs of my students and an attempt to live out the values I espouse, and clarified in the context of

particular learning relationships. In this thesis I will present examples of my lived experience, both personal and professional, that have shaped and influenced the values I seek to live by.

## **Context and Position**

I see the academy as an androcentric order, where the interests of the business world, coupled with the scientific tradition, have served to uphold the voice of reason and subdue or silence emotionality in learning. Taking up a feminist position in my research, I strive to uncover these forms of oppression and redress the balance in my practice, and as such, I have been significantly occupied with concerns of finding voice, both my own and the voices of my students, within the academy. My thinking about these issues has been influenced by two specific theoretical perspectives. The first comes from the work of Belenky *et al.* (1986), where issues of voice and mind are the central themes, within a framework of five perspectives of knowing, which range from the experience of silence to a position of constructed knowing. The second influence is the work of Gilligan (1982), whose ground breaking research with women on moral development suggests that women speak in a 'different voice', one that is primarily concerned with the relational aspects of humanity. Indeed, the work of Belenky *et al.* was inspired and influenced by Gilligan's findings. Building on this relational platform, I have begun to craft an ethical dimension into my inquiry, which I have referred to as 'an ethic care' in the teaching and learning relationship. This perspective has been informed by the work of Noddings (1984), whose philosophy on caring is addressed in Chapter Eight.

"It is time for the voice of the mother to be heard in education" (Noddings, 1984, cited in Belenky *et al.*, 1986:214). This quotation frames the final chapter of *Women's Ways of Knowing*, which is concerned with 'connected teaching', a concept illuminated by the metaphor of teacher as midwife who supports the

students' thinking and helps them speak in their own voice. In this chapter, Freire's critique of the 'banking model' of education, (where education is seen as a process of depositing information into the heads of the students), is used to explain and counterpoise an alternative and emancipatory form of education based on connected teaching and learning relationships. "Like Freire's partner teachers, midwife teachers assist in the emergence of consciousness. They encourage the students to speak in their own active voice" (Belenky *et al.*, 1986:218).

Drawing on Ruddick's (1980) idea of 'maternal thinking', Belenky *et al.* (1986) link it to the concept of the midwife teacher, and they identify three components of maternal thinking, preservation, support and nurturance, which the midwife teacher draws on in the service of her students. Through preservation, maternal thinking seeks to preserve the vulnerability of the child in assisting to be born with its own truth intact; in doing so, the midwife teacher helps the student to hold on to, and not lose sight of, their own ideas and thinking. Secondly, maternal thinking supports the evolution of the students' thinking, enabling them to build on what they know, rather than abandoning what they know for the ideas and thinking of others. Thirdly, maternal thinking serves to nurture and shape the student, so that in time the student may take their own ideas and thinking into the outside world and be accepted in doing so.

The concept of maternal thinking has resonated with me, as it seems to name something about my practice, capturing a way of being in educative relations with my students. More fundamentally, it captures for me the connection between the feminist and critical position, in that it facilitates the processes of emancipation. In other words, it serves to facilitate an emergence of consciousness about the production of knowledge itself. It puts the knower back into the known, as an active knower and as a creator of knowledge.

Feminism and action research is concerned with a way of being in the world. In dealing with voice we address power relations, and by listening to people we can empower them. The link between gaining voice and recognising the social construction of knowledge is central to feminist grounded action research. As educators, we cannot give voice but we can facilitate the dismantling of barriers to speakers. Women's development of voice, expressed as 'the other side of silence'. In other words, from 'silence' to realising that knowledge is constructed, is traced by Belenky *et al.* (1986). However, a criticism of Belenky *et al.* is that they fail to expose the mechanisms that keep women from speaking (Maguire, 2001:63). A feminist approach to action research seeks to uncover and, where possible, disrupt the power relations of silence, beginning with lived experience as a starting point from which to grasp the governing aspects of our social relationships. In this thesis I will explain how the MAPOD process facilitates a critique of lived experience, which helps to uncover and disrupt personal and professional relations of oppression.

At the heart of a feminist approach is a critical position on power and learning. As I research my inquiry accounts I will return to these fundamental concepts to hold them to scrutiny and to examine the coherence of them with respect to the relationship between my theory and practice. But for the moment let me try to link my perspective on context, position and purpose.

### **Context, Position and Purpose**

As an educator, the context for my inquiry is in the field of management learning. I have taken up a position that views managers as moral agents, whose work is not value free. Neither, of course, is the work of an educator who in the current climate in higher education is increasingly subjected to pressures and demands of the market economy. I return to issues of context in Part Three of

this thesis, in my discussion of barriers to learning in respect of educating and changing the social formation in the academy.

Working with mature students (practicing managers) in the teaching and learning relationship, I have focused on facilitating them to come to voice, to be able to speak on issues as they find them and, in the process, help them reclaim the integrity of mind that the traditional passive process of education has stifled. The MAPOD programme has, with its focus on the personal and organisational development, sought to do this in a holistic way. The vehicle for student development has been that of critical action learning, through which I have advocated a strategy for the critique of a persons' learning history, examining the social and political opportunities and constraints involved, and with the potential emancipatory process of self-knowledge that reveals. I have argued that the personal knowledge reconstructed through critical action learning gives the individual a spur to action in the critique of their own practice for learning and change. To borrow the term 'artisans of democracy' from Rosenfeld and Tardieu (2000), I suggest that in the development of a critique to practice both my students and I have been engaged with learning the craft of the artisan. I have consistently built up a claim regarding my perspective on the purpose of education, principally being one of 'education for democracy'. Examples of student work for which I claim an educative influence are presented later in this thesis to illustrate how their engagement with the MAPOD process has enabled them to make a difference in their professional and organisational contexts.

Purposes then are concerned with effectiveness, justice and participation, and collaboration with others. If education is for democracy, then in its process it must reveal that which is hidden and that which undermines the social formation both in our practice and in the context of a learning society. In other words, education for democracy seeks to reveal and, where possible, challenge formations and relationships of oppression in our practice and lived experiences.

Notwithstanding the integral disciplinary nature of the action research approach, there are similarities and links between the process of critical action learning and that of action research. What unites them is critique of practice. In Chapter Two, where I define action research, it is the nature of critique in action research which I both explore and subject to critical scrutiny, in order to demonstrate both its importance to educational action research and the need to be cautious. In taking a critical stance, that does not then itself become oppressive and defeat the very purpose of critique.

## **CHAPTER TWO: APPROACH AND METHOD**

### **Introduction**

This chapter is presented in three sections, namely “Defining Action Research”, “I am the Subject and Object of my Research” and “Method and Process”.

In the first section, “Defining Action Research”, I begin by introducing the history of this approach and the legacy of Lewin’s (1946) rational scientific social research and experiments in social change as an attempt to facilitate democracy. The contributions of Carr and Kemmis (1986) and Kemmis (2001), contemporary thinkers in the field, are then addressed, exploring the relevance of critical theory, an emancipatory approach to action research. Critiques that challenge the moral high ground of critical theory and expose it as a potential totalising theory are then drawn upon. Following this, I address the growing popularity of reflective practice as a means of inquiry in action research and, similarly, draw attention to the need for caution and critique to unquestioning claims for reflective practice. This section is concluded with an account of McNiff’s (1999) conception of action research as a distinctly human endeavour where individuals act with the best interests of others at heart. Finally, I highlight the significance of personal knowledge in research, drawing on Polanyi’s (1962) seminal contribution to the field.

In the second section, “I am the subject and object of my research: a dialectical engagement with the world”, I explain what I understand by ‘a dialectical engagement with the world’ drawing on Rowan’s (1981) dialectical paradigm for human inquiry and the six moments of dialectical engagement that entail, as a vehicle for the presentation of my cycles of inquiry. In constructing this account, I draw upon McNiff’s (1988) principles and practice of action research, and Eames’s (1993) account of a dialectical form of action research based in educational knowledge given from his own perspective as a teacher- researcher,



and of his understanding of the shared characteristics between the action research cycle and dialectical logic. My appreciation is developed of Whitehead's (1989) conception of 'I' as a living contradiction contained within the creation of a living educational theory and his subsequent development of these ideas (1993).<sup>11</sup> Additionally, the ideas of Coulter and Weins (2002) are drawn upon, whose thinking about educational judgment was inspired by Hannah Arendt, who asks in her writings about the Holocaust what it means to be a judging actor and what it means to be a judging spectator? Finally, I draw on Lomax's (1994) professorial inaugural lecture to clarify what makes educational research valid.

In the final section, "Method and process issues in theory, writing and data in this inquiry", I address key issues pertaining to an action research approach, starting with the examination of the role of theory and literature, in order to highlight the important differences in their use in an action research account compared with their use in a more traditional approach to research and the consequent construction and presentation of a thesis. The process of writing this account is then explored, with particular reference to the role of life story in the construction of my thesis. Next, I explore my process of data gathering with respect to the methodological issues involved in gathering evidence from which I assert my claims to know my embodied values in practice. This includes oral and visual data in respect of my teaching and learning relationships with students on the MAPOD programme, which has helped me assess whether and to what extent I am living my values in action. By providing evidence in a visual form of representation, as an alternative and complement to the traditional narrative forms contained in a thesis, the aim is to show you moments in my practice which capture the living inquiry process in which I develop a connoisseur's eye with the purpose of creating loving and life affirming educative relations.

---

<sup>11</sup> In *The Growth of Educational Knowledge*.

### *Defining Action Research*

Whilst the term ‘action research’ is generally ascribed to the work of Lewin (1946) and his work on community development and change, it was first used by Moreno in his work with prostitutes in Vienna some years earlier. The idea of action for change was then taken up by Corey (1949), who believed that teaching research should have a practical effect in the classroom. In the 1970s these ideas were revived by Elliot and Adelman (1973), in what has become known as the ‘Ford Teaching Project’. In the 1980s the work of Carr and Kemmis<sup>12</sup> established the ‘high ground’ for the practice of educational action research, linking the practical endeavour of action research with critical theory and the ideas of Jurgen Habermas.

“Action research is usually seen as a cyclical activity where you can make a plan, carry it through, monitor what goes on, reflect on events critically (using the monitoring data) and move forward. This is an extremely simplistic idea and in my experience one that has never operated as smoothly as this description implies” Lomax (2002:123).

Webb (1996) tells us that this definition of action research has become ‘codified’ as the way to do action research. It is, I suggest, part of Lewin’s legacy of rational scientific social research and experiments in social change. “Rational social management, therefore, proceeds in a spiral of steps each of which is composed of a circle of planning, action, and fact-finding about the result of the action” (Lewin, 1946:38). What Lewin did was to bring together practitioners and social scientists to run workshops - social experiments in change in inter-group relations, using an hypothesis and evaluation to test the validity of their interventions. He saw action, research and training as a triangle guiding these interventions for practical social change. Lewin saw the potential for facilitating

---

<sup>12</sup> And their book *Becoming Critical: Education Knowledge and Action Research*, 1986.

more equal and democratic relations by these interventions, but was equally aware that the political will and co-operation of those in power was needed to realise change.

Following Lomax, I want to draw on her adaptation of the definition of action research given by Carr and Kemmis (1986):

“Action research is a self reflective, self critical and critical enquiry undertaken by professionals to improve the rationality and justice of their own practices, their understanding of these practices and the wider contexts of their practice” (2002:122).

In this adaptation, emphasis is placed on the individual professional located in their wider social and political context, with critique at the personal, organisational or wider systems level. In broad terms it is this adaptation that resonates with my approach.

Kemmis<sup>13</sup> sets out to explore the relevance of critical theory for action research, which he describes as “emancipatory action research in the footsteps of Jurgen Habermas” (2001:91). He begins by framing action research as an approach that is capable of having an impact on practitioners’ theories and practice, “approaches which would involve practitioners themselves in researching the relationship between their theories and practices” (2001:91).

But does this conception of theory and practice imply that they are separate entities? If it does, it poses a problem for action research as it may well serve to privilege the universities’ vested interests in theorising, as suggested by Winter (1997), rather than seeing theory incorporated into practice as a spontaneous response to the emergent issues of the research and not driven or predetermined by theory. However, what about Whitehead’s conception of living theory, a

---

<sup>13</sup> In the *Handbook of Action Research; Participative Inquiry and Practice*.

practical conception of what works, grounded in the values and intentions of the practitioner, that may be influenced by the ideas of others and incorporated into practice? These alternative perspectives have quite different implications for our understanding of the relationship between theory and practice in action research.

As an emancipatory approach, Kemmis emphasises action research as research done by practitioners and not research done to them. Thus, he argues that practitioners will do, or not do, their own enlightenment in the process. What is important here is that research is carried out by practitioners; in other words, those who are responsible for the practice and not by outsiders.

The enlightenment view suggests that rational argument can help us understand and change oppressive social forces by more just social relationships. Critical theory, in turn, serves to highlight how an unequal distribution of power in social relations can distort communication. Habermas advocated an 'ideal speech' community, in which individuals are free to communicate, speaking their truth, undistorted by the influences of power.

### **What is Emancipatory or Critical Action Research?**

Kemmis begins by telling what it is not. He says that much action research is of a technical and problem-solving nature. For example, a project aimed at decreasing sexist behaviour would be deemed to be successful when the outcomes match the aspirations. But what a problem-solving approach does not necessarily question are the goals, or how the situation has been discursively, socially and historically constructed. He suggests that there is also much practical action research of the kind that follows in the footsteps of the late Donald Schön, where the education of the reflective practitioner aims at both practice improvement and at enabling the practitioner to see how their goals and the way in which they see their work is shaped by the way they see and understand themselves in context.

Additionally, he describes a body of research that he says is much smaller, that of emancipatory - critical action - research.

“This form of action research aims not only at improving outcomes, and improving the self-understanding of practitioners, but also at assisting practitioners to arrive at a critique of their social or educational work and work settings... It recognizes that we may want to improve our achievements in relation to our functional goals, but also that our goals as defined by particular individuals, or as defined by particular organization may be limited or inappropriate given a wider view of the situation in which we live or work. It recognizes that we may want to improve our self-understandings, but also that our self-understandings may be shaped by collective misunderstandings about the nature and consequences about what we do. So emancipatory action research aims towards helping practitioners develop a critical and self-critical understanding of their situation - which is to say, an understanding of the way both particular people and particular settings are shaped and re-shaped discursively, culturally, socially and historically. It aims to connect the personal and the political in collaborative research and action aimed at transforming situations to overcome felt dissatisfactions, alienation, ideological distortion, and the injustices of oppression and domination.” (Kemmis, 2001:92).

Distinguishing between the three different categories of action research (technical, practical and emancipatory) was an important contribution to the field, enabling practitioners to understand more clearly the type of action research with which they are engaged. For example, humanistic approaches are concerned primarily with self-realisation and the removal of self-imposed distortions. They are most likely to achieve a functional or practical outcome; not a critical/ emancipatory one unless the conditions for an ideal speech community are in place.<sup>14</sup>

According to Rowland (2000), the purpose of action research for the ‘enquiring tutor’ is to improve our practice in such a way as to bring us closer to an ideal speech community, in which reason can overcome the vested interests of power.

---

<sup>14</sup> Whereas a critical approach addresses the historical and social context of oppression and relies on changing the power relations created by these relationships.

I believe that such ideals are worthy of pursuit and are reflected in the intentions and values that underpin the conduct of MAPOD as a learning community, and as such are reflected in the goals of my inquiry. I am aware, however, that overcoming the distortions of power is complex, and later in this thesis I will draw out this complexity in examples of my teaching and learning relationships.

The position of 'the moral high ground' of critical theory has not passed without criticism, in particular, Gibson's (1985) critique of Carr and Kemmis' *Becoming Critical...* points out that the book itself lacks critique. He argues that it is elitist, fails to see its own contradictions and, in particular, privileges the group yet is naïve to group dynamics. This critique is picked up and developed by Webb, who argues:

"The excesses of communitarian politics are played out in miniature if groups become carried away with building their own 'solidarity', manifestly or subtly encouraging their own conformity or, in short, becoming intolerant of alternative views to their own. The idea that a 'rational' position may be reached when all 'distortions' (to the correct view) have been eliminated is dangerous and so too is the recreation of 'false consciousness'" (Webb, 1996:149).

Webb is not arguing for a position of liberalism in which all views are regarded equally, but rather one in which "it is incumbent upon a particular group, in rejecting the views of others, that they explain their own partisan position and seek legitimacy and continual reassurance in their use of power" (ibid.). Webb (1996:152) suggests the incorporation of Whitehead's 'I' as a living contradiction challenges the privileging of the group over the individual and offers an alternative action research approach in which the individual/self is the subject and object of inquiry.

Whitehead's conception of living theory is itself a major contribution to educational theory, since living theory is not conceived of as a separate entity

from practice. Rather, its integrity comes from the unification of theory and practice in the experience of educational practitioners as they evaluate past actions and imagine future actions, in response to particular learning relationships and contexts in which they enact their values in practice. Whitehead's conception of living theory is a dialectical engagement with the world that challenges the traditional philosophy of educational research that is based on a disciplines approach to education.

Rowland (2000) also focuses on the individual educator, emphasising the wider context; in other words, how practice relates to wider social values and purposes. Rowland tells us that Foucault criticised Habermas for being utopian in even thinking that there could be a state of communication free of the coercive effects of power. Whilst Foucault, like Habermas, was concerned with challenging dominant power relations, he did not think that power itself was necessarily evil, believing that power was a product of social relations, which had the potential to change (Roland, 2000:73).

What Foucault says in the interview that Rowland draws on, leads us to see the link between personal development and reflective and reflexive enquiry as a means by which we might avoid abusive and domineering power relations. This is described by Foucault as:

“...an ethic of care for the self as a practice of freedom... The problem is not trying to dissolve them in the utopia of a perfectly transparent communication, but to give one's self the rules of law, the practice of self which would allow these games of power to be played with minimum domination” (Foucault, 1988:18).

Coming to know myself as a reflective practitioner has been an important part of my development in the course of this inquiry that I intend to illustrate within the context of examples given in this thesis. In particular, developing the necessary

maturity to address my own ego defences has enabled me to move beyond the limitations of my own perspective, take a more critical eye to my own practice and make the necessary changes. Drawing on Rowan's (2001) conception of maturity, I explore what this idea means for the reflective practitioner and for continuing professional development in an article.<sup>15</sup> This is what I say:

“Central to existential insight is the belief that we are responsible for ‘being ourselves’. It is this quality that makes us fully human. Rowan suggests that this implies a commitment to ‘get inside ones own experience’, the commitment that is at the heart of humanistic action research and self-reflexive inquiry” (Hartog, 2002:235).

Rowan's concept of maturity involves a shift in consciousness from what he calls a mental ego to a mature ego. This, he suggests, involves a shift in power relations, from power over in the mental ego to power with others associated with a mature ego.

Notwithstanding the criticisms made of critical theory, the work of Carr and Kemmis (1986) informed by the ideals of the ‘ideal speech’ community of Habermas, are worth pursuing as part of a democratic process of inquiry. As tutors, we might ideally employ the use of dialogue as part of the learning process, explicitly inviting participants to build and develop the skills of ‘team learning’ and ‘personal mastery’.<sup>16</sup> What we have to caution against is the use of critical theory as a totalising force that denies alternative conceptions of the truth.

### **The Growth of Reflective Practice**

Alongside the growth of action research, reflective practice has grown in recent years with ever increasing popularity. Reflective practice came to the fore as a

---

<sup>15</sup> Entitled “Becoming a reflective practitioner: a continuing professional development strategy through humanistic action research”.

<sup>16</sup> Two of the disciplines of Senge *et al.*'s (1994) approach to organisational learning.



result of Schön's seminal work in 1983 and 1987, and with his declaration of a 'new epistemology of practice'.

Schön's ideas were based on his work developing professionals, in which he challenged the adequacy of the 'high ground' of orthodox management theory to address the 'swamp' of the practice field. This new epistemology was to stand the question of professional knowledge on its head, as Schön sought to reveal the competence and artistry embedded in skilful practice. By unpacking the process of reflection-in-action (in other words, thinking-in-doing), Schön pointed to the knowledge that practitioners bring to unique and uncertain situations that cannot be accounted for by simply applying theory to practice. Once he had developed his image of the reflective practitioner, Schön began to pose the question "What kind of knowledge would be appropriate to an epistemology of practice based in reflection in action"? His second book (Schön, 1987)<sup>17</sup> strives to address this question. Drawing out the situated practice of an architectural design studio, he develops a model of the 'reflective practicum' based on learning by doing, and helped by the expertise of a coach; in other words, a master practitioner who helps the student become proficient in reflection-in-action, through dialogue, in which the coach and student engage in a reciprocal process of reflection-in-action.

This model of reflective practice has undoubtedly influenced the education and practice of many professionals. Its popularity is such that little or no thought is given to the limits and consequences of the application of Schön's theory to practice itself. Usher *et al.* (2001:144-145) criticise and problematise the potential for the instrumental application of Schön's model for reflective practice. Whilst they note that Schön would not intend this to happen, they claim that this is how he is frequently read and suggest that a lack of reflexivity in

---

<sup>17</sup> *Educating The Reflective Practitioner.*

Schön's text may be responsible. In emphasising the difference between problem-solving (a technical rational approach to reflective practice) and problematising (indicative of a critical approach to reflective practice), they suggest that:

“Professionals are increasingly coming to realise that practice is not just about ‘problem solving’ or selecting technical means to achieve given ends, but concerns ‘problem setting’, defined by Schön as a non-technical process, one ‘in which, interactively, we *name* things to which we will attend and *frame* the context in which we will attend to them” (Usher *et al.*, 2001:144), original emphasis.

They tell us that the reflected process, “turning thought back on action and on the knowing which is implicit in action” is stimulated by surprise, which in turn gives rise to “an invitation to renaming and reframing”; in other words, the process by which we come to understand what is going on in practice.

“Given that we are interested in helping professionals become reflective practitioners and that we believe Schön has a place in the curriculum, how are we to teach him: a) as a formal theorist of reflective practice, b) as an exemplar of how in particular cases to tease out, challenge or change our knowing in action, c) some combination of both?” (ibid.).

Usher *et al.* (2001:145) state that “reflection in action is a practice of generating theory that speaks back to and revises actions” and distinguish between theory as practised and actioned, as opposed to something that is abstract and disembodied contemplation. They suggest that the master practitioner coaching model, advocated by Schön for the development of reflective practice, “is less than critical” because: a) it fails to reveal and address the specific context of the particular cases; and b) it fails to reveal or make explicit the taken for granted assumptions that govern the thinking of the master practitioner.

Ghaye (2000) similarly urges caution about jumping on the reflective practice bandwagon. For whilst reflection may help us see and speak about our

experience differently, through critique to practice, by reframing and changing our thinking, we need to be careful not to see it as a panacea. Ghaye is particularly mindful of this suggesting “that we should not be afraid to speak out, ‘to go against the flow’, to ask for evidence rather than blindly accepting ‘reality’ as described by others” (2000:66).

He reminds us that reflection and empowerment are problematic terms that may mean different things to different people, and he asks us to consider, whose reality, what evidence and what transformation we are claiming as a result of reflective practice. Furthermore, he reminds us that there are different forms of reflective practice, and that empowerment is a ‘personal reality’:

“I suggest that empowerment is about individuals coming to know, express and critically analyse their own realities and having the commitment, will and power to act and transform these realities to enhance personal and collective well-being, security, satisfaction, capability, and working conditions” (Ghaye, 2000:79).

These considerations are not insignificant given the relationship between reflection and action in the research process, and specifically in relation to evidence-based professionalism and the conduct of a research project for the self-study of an educational practitioner.

## **A Human Conception of Educational Action Research**

McNiff suggests that action research is about individuals acting in the best interests of each other, when she says:

“It begins with individual persons, you and I, recognising that we care in relation with each other - I with you, and you with me - and we care enough to take the trouble to do something about our own personal practice for the benefit of each other. Such recognition of personal accountability is an act of devotion, a prayerful act of care” (1999).

Like McNiff, I am attracted to the individual and relational purposes that action research can enhance. Through personal responsibility, commitment and passion for my practice as an educator I can account for myself, and where I find myself wanting or experience myself as a living contradiction I know that it is within my power to change. Like the health care workers that Ghaye writes about (particularly nurses), tutors have qualities of power that they can exercise for the good and well-being of others which, for example, may include caring and life-affirming educative relations, as well as their expert and professional power, and position power within their own academic community. As an academic, I can relate to these qualities of power whilst accepting and recognising that I have a low status (rather like nurses do in relation to the wider medical profession) both in the eyes of my management and in the wider academic community, but it does not prevent me using the power I do have to good intent.

McNiff (1999) advocates educational action research that addresses issues of what it means to be human and how we should live together (a humanitarian conceptualisation of curriculum). As educators, McNiff suggests we should try to make our own influence count for the good, this she regards as a personal undertaking:

“This is a personal undertaking, a desire to transform oneself into the best of available potentials, for those potentials are, in Macdonald’s words, potentials of response. We take care in our own way of being, knowing that we must embrace our connectedness with each other and the rest of creation, knowing that it is our responsibility as educators to respond with thoughtfulness and compassion” (McNiff, 1999).

The inquiry into my own practice began some years ago, circa 1996, when the MAPOD programme got underway. I began with the commitment to create a learning environment that would serve as a safe haven for my students, many of whom were experiencing the stresses of mergers, acquisitions and redundancies

at that time. They needed a learning environment that gave them time to think and recuperate, and where they might renew their own desires to make a difference. Creating such an environment was the work of community building, a task which I saw as central to the programme design and for which the residential element was crucial. It took me a while, however, to understand the significance of what a self-study might involve, specifically putting my 'I' at the centre of my inquiry, such that I became the subject and object of my own research. For a long time I lamented that if I were to improve my practice I would need first to understand it. I saw the first two years of MAPOD rather like a reconnaissance exercise in which I was finding out what the practice field of running such a programme comprised. Although I had experienced being a student on a similar management/ learning programme at Lancaster University in the early 1990s, I was not prepared for the demands and contradictions that I would experience in my role as a tutor.

Learning to understand my practice has been a significant and emergent process of my inquiry, subject to on-going critique. This personal undertaking led me to consider the role of personal knowledge in my inquiry, and to better understand the world from my own point of view, helping me see more clearly, over time, the process of creating and legitimating my own living theory. Let me explain by drawing on the insights of Polanyi (1962).

### **Learning to Understand the World From my Own Point of View**

In introducing his thesis on personal knowledge, Polanyi constructs a lesson from the Copernican revolution, in order that we might see more clearly the relationship between the scientific preoccupation of 'objectivity' and personal knowledge. Until the Copernican revolution, man had been at the centre of the universe. Polanyi argues that if we truly examined the universe objectively, we would be preoccupied with "interstellar dust, relieved only by incandescent

masses of oxygen” (1962:3), which would mean that scientists would almost invariably ignore man’s role in the universe. Polanyi laments the absurdity of such a scenario. He argues that we must see the universe from a human perspective; in other words, from our own point of view as human beings.

“For, as human beings, we must inevitably see the universe from a centre lying within ourselves and speak about it in terms of a human language shaped by the exigencies of human intercourse. Any attempt to eliminate our human perspective from our picture of the world must lead to absurdity” (Polanyi, 1962:3).

I see Polanyi’s view as pointing to the existential and human nature of all science and not just human inquiry or action research as a distinctly human endeavour. Polanyi argues that Copernicus “gave preference to man’s delight in abstract theory” (ibid.), a preference that has had significant consequences for how we see the world and for the dominance of the scientific paradigm. In recognising the value of abstract theory and so-called objectivity, Polanyi suggests that theory offers us maps, and the more pure it is (like mathematics) it can be laid down in a system of rules, the benefit of which helps us navigate our way through otherwise uncharted experience. It does, however, also serve to screen our “senses from sensory experience” (Polanyi, 1962:4).

He recognises that we have substituted the anthropocentrism of our senses for the anthropocentrism of reason. His thesis calls for the reclamation of “man’s indispensable intellectual powers and for their passionate participation in the act of knowing” (Polanyi, 1962:16-17).

With the emergence of positivism towards the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the separation of reason and experience is further pressed by establishing the principle/practice of not “going beyond experience by affirming anything that could not be tested by experience” (Polanyi, 1962:9). Polanyi describes this as “a

massive absurdity” (ibid.). Furthermore, he argues that the theory of relativity, which was intended to confirm this scientific view, has “some striking evidence for its refutation” (ibid.). He argues that Einstein’s discovery of rationality in nature was covered up by philosophical prejudice, and that the scientific community were so carried away with Einstein’s world picture that they were unable to think in different terms (Polanyi, 1962:11-13). He further states that Einstein’s autobiography reveals that he intuitively discovered the relationship between time and space as a teenager, before he had ever heard of the Michelson-Morley experiment which, according to Polanyi, is the way Einstein’s discovery of the theory of relativity is generally introduced in text books, giving the impression that it is a ‘scientific’ experiment negating Michelson and Morley. Polanyi’s thesis on personal knowledge suggests that we find it:

“...manifested in the appreciation of probability and of order in the exact sciences, and see it at work even more extensively in the way descriptive sciences rely on skills and connoisseurship” (Polanyi, 1962:17).

It is the development of the connoisseur’s eye that I am particularly interested in, with respect to my own inquiry and in the process of developing myself as a reflective practitioner, in order to improve the rationality and justice of my teaching and learning relationships.

“Connoisseurship, like skill, can be communicated only by example, not by precept” (Polanyi, 1962:54). Using wine tasting and medicine as his examples, he suggests that the skills and connoisseurship involved emerge after a long period of experience and under the instruction of a master. There are similarities here in Schön’s (1987) model for educating the reflective practitioner, involving learning by doing and coaching, helped by a master practitioner. In the case of medicine, the diagnostic skills come into being through the practice and learning drawn from a number of case study examples. In my case, I have had the good

fortune to serve a form of apprenticeship during this Ph.D. inquiry at the Centre For Action Research in Professional Practice at the University of Bath, supervised by ‘masterful’ academics, who appreciate both the conventions of ‘scientific rigour’ and the role of aesthetic and tacit knowledge in research.

Reflective practice, though growing in popularity in professional development circles, is a relatively new form of inquiry in the business school context. My own development, whilst being rich in the experience of case examples drawn from my working relations with individual students on the MAPOD programme, has also been influenced by Senge *et al.*’s (1994) ‘fifth discipline’ approach to learning, in which personal mastery, along with systems thinking, shared vision, team learning and mental models, provide an integrated framework for personal and organisational learning. It is such an approach, linking the personal and the organisational aspects of learning, that I have pursued and which provides an overarching framework to my thinking and practice, both personally and professionally, in the organisational context of conceiving and giving birth to MAPOD.

Since reflective practice has a history in the education of nurses, social workers and in therapy, I have turned to lessons available in these fields of practice to inform my own thinking and development. However, lessons from management and business schools are emerging. For example, the chapter by Marshall (2001)<sup>18</sup> is an excellent account that helps our understanding of the inner and outer processes of a reflective and reflexive approach, and in Hartog (2002),<sup>19</sup> I show how I have used a self-study inquiry to develop an appreciative conception of my practice that recognises the moral imperative of developing reflective

---

<sup>18</sup> A professor in the School of Management at the University of Bath, entitled “Self-reflective inquiry practices” in the *Handbook of Action Research*.

<sup>19</sup> A paper entitled “Becoming a reflective practitioner: a continuing professional development strategy through humanistic action research”.



practice; showing how action research can provide a framework for evidence-based professionalism and how my practice is guided by values lived out and aspired to in my practice. What I have suggested, by bringing my own experience into the public domain, is that this approach has general utility for all practitioners concerned with continuing professional development and, in particular, those in the field of Human Resource Management and Development, which is the academic area within which I am located in the Business School at Middlesex University.

Commenting on the amount of time taken by students of chemistry, biology and medicine in their practical courses, Polanyi says:

“[it] shows how greatly these sciences rely on the transmission of skills and connoisseurship from master to apprentice. It offers an impressive demonstration of the extent to which the art of knowing has remained unspecifiable at the very heart of science” (Polanyi, 1962:55).

Following the insights of Polanyi, I am committed to understanding the world from my own point of view. For example, in Chapter Nine,<sup>20</sup> I aim to show, by way of examples, the art of my knowing and the intellectual powers indispensable to my passionate participation in the act of knowing.

To summarise, action research can be defined as an approach that involves self-reflection and self-critique in a process of critical enquiry with the aim of improving the personal practice of the professional and the wider context of that practice. As a human endeavour, it is based on a caring intent to improve the situation for the benefit of others. Thus care, rationality and justice are all fundamental to the values that guide a critical and emancipatory approach to action research. Central to this approach is personal knowledge, to know the

---

<sup>20</sup> Entitled “Developing a connoisseur’s eye: exploring the aesthetics of my teaching and learning relationships On MAPOD”.

world from our perspective as human beings, so that we might better understand our own process of creating and legitimating our own living theories.

***I Am The Subject And Object Of My Research:  
A Dialectical Engagement With The World***

**Introduction**

In my research I place my 'I' at the centre of my inquiry as I create and legitimate my own living theory contained in the descriptions and explanations of my practice. By framing my research journey through cycles of action and reflection in a dialectical engagement with the world I aim to show you how this inquiry has evolved. In doing so, I will explain the development of my thinking in this inquiry from the early stages, when I struggled to see my 'I' at the centre of my inquiry, to the point where I have come to know myself as a reflective practitioner, able to develop a critical conception of my practice.

**A Dialectical Engagement With the World**

The purpose of a dialectical engagement with the world is to get closer to the nature of human experience and our understanding of it in the course of human inquiry. Action research is a cyclical process of action and reflection, distinguished by a systematic process of reflection on action, with the purpose of improvement and change. It is a process of inquiry often presented at its simplest within a cycle of three recursive steps – planning, doing and review. But a dialectical paradigm takes a broader view than that of the 'project'. Rowan (1981) places his dialectical approach to action research linking the concepts of alienation, social change and the research cycle.

## **Alienation in Research**

Alienation is defined by Rowan (1981) as treating people as fragments. In Marxian terms this includes alienation from the product, the work, others and the self. These are all aspects of alienation found in traditional approaches to research contained in the subject-object split, where people are cast as research subjects and the knower is detached through the objective-scientific process from his own knowledge.

Significantly, a self-study of a teacher researcher, as a form of first person research, challenges traditional forms of alienating enquiry by placing the 'I' at the centre of the inquiry and putting the knower back into the known, to give an account of their practice in the form of descriptions and explanations situated *within* the context of their professional role and educative relations *with* others. Although Rowan uses his cycle to promote participatory research (research with others who would traditionally have been alienated as the object of the research), I feel justified in drawing on his cycle using first person inquiry, in that the dialectical paradigm approach to research demands self-reflexive awareness from the researcher, which includes due consideration of the different perspectives of others in the research context and in the action reflection process (the politics of which, I attend to later in this account).

Rowan cautions us in our belief that new paradigm research is totally free from alienation, reminding us that we exist within an alienating world. Indeed, relationships of power are central to the politics of my inquiry and the pursuit of a discursive democracy. These are problematised and discussed in my accounts in this thesis. For the educational action researcher, this begs the question about the purpose of their research, which in my case is concerned with improving the rationality and justice of my practice.

### *Social change in research*

The second concept addressed by Rowan relevant to 'new paradigm thinking' is social change and its relevance to research. He points out that traditional research has little concern for changing people's lives in contrast to experiential and participatory research, which involves a deal of social change.

McNiff presents action research as a problem posing approach to inquiry, suggesting that it is the search for the right questions appropriate to the educational situation and the right answers:

"It is the questions of educational research that are important and the question that a teacher is prepared to ask himself about what is going on in this class, and his preparation to answer that honestly and with due regard to the possible consequences. These consequences will almost certainly imply a change, but it is a change that is going to lead to an improvement. That improvement would not have come about if he had not in the first place been aware or sensitive to his own professional standards" (1988:5).

Questions of the kind "How can I improve my practice?" thus form the basis of such an inquiry, benchmarked against the values espoused and lived in practice, along with the needs of the students and the exigencies of the situation.

McNiff (ibid.) points out that one of the challenges of educational action research is that it involves what good teachers do as a matter of course, begging the question "What makes it research?". McNiff argues that research goes further than good teaching, in that it involves being critical and aware of that teaching, using this self-critical awareness to be open to a process of change and practice improvement. She says:

"It encourages teachers to become adventurous and critical in their thinking, to develop theories and rationales for their practice and to give reasoned justification for their public claims to professional knowledge. It is this systematic enquiry

made public which distinguishes the activity as research”  
(McNiff, 1988:6).

Thus, educational action research in a first person inquiry is predicated on critical self-reflection, the descriptions explanations and rationale of one’s living theories,<sup>21</sup> and the process of communicating ideas and testing them out in the public domain.

Teacher research has grown up in response to the tradition of social science research in education where the professional researcher comes in to do research in the classroom setting, with little or no regard for the educative practice of the teacher or the values that underpin that practice. A study of singularity of my professional practice as a tutor in higher education is epistemologically and methodologically distinct from the traditions of social science in that it is based on my values as an educator and ideas about what constitutes loving and life affirming values. Furthermore, my inquiry is driven by values for social justice, concerned with the realisation of freedom for individuals and the collective realisation of discursive democracy.

Whitehead reminds us that “education is a value laden activity” and thus values are “fundamental to educational theory”, describing them as “human goals that give our lives their particular form” (1989:45).

“I do not believe that values are the type of qualities whose meanings can be communicated solely through a propositional form. I think values are embodied in our practice and their meaning can be communicated in the course of their emergence in practice” (Whitehead, *ibid.*).

---

<sup>21</sup> Whitehead’s (1989) concept of the educational practitioners’ ‘living theory’, in which he proposes a reconstruction of educational theory that takes account of the living theories that practitioners construct in their conception of what works and in a form of question and answer which includes propositions from the disciplines of educational theory.

That values give purpose and meaning to my practice and thus the nature of my inquiry requires a humanist conception of 'science'.

Rowan implies that the practice of social science and its methods of research have contributed to a fragmentary account of human experience. Drawing on Mitroff and Kilmann's (1978) typology of scientists, he contrast the style of the 'analytical scientist'<sup>22</sup> with the 'particular humanist' who counterpoises the traditional analytical scientist<sup>23</sup>. For the 'particular humanist', activities are value constituted, action oriented and political, preferring the logic of the unique and the particular. The preferred mode of inquiry being the case study of the particular individual.

Reason (1981:49)<sup>24</sup> reminds us that the 'particular humanist' along with the 'conceptual humanist' are two styles of inquiry based on feeling that are concerned with personal and passionate knowledge compared with the dispassionate knowledge of the traditional scientist. Mapping my preferred style of inquiry in relation to this typology, I would suggest that my approach leans heavily towards the style of the particular humanist, informed by personal knowledge and driven by passionate and committed inquiry, that seeks to embrace the feeling side of 'personhood'. Like the particular humanist Reason describes, I am not particularly interested in developing general theories of human behaviour, though I do appreciate the general propositions of the 'conceptual humanistic perspective'. As my inquiry shows, I have tried to capture the unique humanity of the individual in respect of my own study of singularity and evidenced in Chapters Seven and Nine.<sup>25</sup>

---

<sup>22</sup> Whose preferred method would be, for example, the controlled experiment.

<sup>23</sup> For example, as one who believes in the personal nature of scientific knowledge.

<sup>24</sup> In his 'appreciation of Mitroff and Kilmann'.

<sup>25</sup> 'Working with Margaret' and 'Developing a connoisseur's eye'.

Reason (ibid.) also suggests that the style of the particular humanist is feminine in comparison to the masculine features of the traditional scientist. He reminds us that we are moving away from a traditional view of science, and he suggests that Rowan's intention is that his research cycle should encompass all modes of inquiry.<sup>26</sup> Reason (ibid.) thus urges us not to get caught up in the process of classification suggesting that the challenge of science is whether it can tell good stories. In writing this thesis I have been concerned to tell a good story about my research.

## **The Research Cycle**

Rowan puts forward a model for research that can be used differently depending on your approach. This model has six stages that include: being, thinking, project, encounter, making sense and communication.

In the traditional research project one may identify or be given a problem (being). The review of literature, to identify what has gone before, follows (thinking). A research plan or design is agreed (project). Then the experiment or survey is conducted (encounter). Data is analysed (sense making). Finally, the thesis is written, papers are produced and taken to conference (communication), after which the researcher returns to their normal activities (being).

### *A dialectic approach*

A dialectical approach renders a different use of this model, though using the same stages. It places emphasis on change, process and movement, shaping the way that change takes place through conflict and opposition. In this respect, many characteristics of a dialectical approach and the cycles of action and reflection are shared. Eames (1993) acknowledges this as he describes what he

---

<sup>26</sup> Even though Mitroff and Kilmann locate it within a conceptual humanist perspective.

understands by dialectical knowledge. He explains the similarities with cycles of action and reflection that he perceives specifically in the movement toward enlightenment generated by the action research process, the dialogic structure of question and answer, and their close relationship with practice.

Firstly, by building on Schön's (1983) work<sup>27</sup> and the proposition that professional knowledge is formed through a reflective conversation, in a situation, the context of which is both unique and changing, Eames suggests that reflective practitioners both think and act through an interplay of question and answer. Furthermore, he states that dialogue is fundamental to the development of a living form of knowledge. Secondly, Eames (ibid.) locates dialogue as part of an ancient lineage of logic characterised by both stability in the form of the logic of question and answer, and yet uncertain in that the answer is not yet known.

“When I question my own practice, then, or when I engage in a dialogue with a pupil, I am using a logical form. I don't know for sure what the answer will be, or where it will lead me, but I do know that the logical form will sustain the forward movement of my living changing understanding” (Eames, 1993:5).

The dialogic process creates emergence in the inquiry rather than rather progressing to a predetermined plan, giving way to the emergence of spirals of inquiry to explore issues generated by the inquiry process itself, allowing the researcher to investigate different problems without losing sight of the main purpose of the inquiry, and attend to and accommodate the complexities of real life.

In asking question(s) in reflective conversations with the self, the educational action researcher experiences a gap or contradiction between their values as

---

<sup>27</sup> *Educating the Reflective Practitioner.*



espoused and how they are lived in practice. For example, when 'I' as the subject and object of my own inquiry experience my 'I' as a living contradiction. Eames (ibid.) tells us that contradiction is the nucleus of dialectics and the process of acting in response to this contradiction enables the negation to be resolved.

"I perceive that my practice does not reach the way I want things to be; it falls short, and is being 'negated'; I therefore take action to solve the contradiction - to 'negate the negation'; this new phase will then give rise to fresh contradictions or negations, which I will take steps to solve or negate, and so on. It is a form that is continually living, changing, developing" (Eames, 1993:5).

Finally, Eames tells us that the third strand of dialectical knowledge is contained in practice, and he gives emphasis to the fact that the question and answers of the dialectical form are a part of practice, not separate from it.

Whitehead (1989) tells us that by viewing his 'I' through videotaped material of his teaching and learning relationships with his students, he could see himself as a living contradiction; holding educational values on the one hand and, on the other, experiencing their negation. He argues that the form of propositional theory serves to mask the reality of the living form; in other words, the dialectical nature of reality. Whitehead explains that this is because Aristotelian logic demands that the questioner put his question in a definite form asking whether or not a person has a particular characteristic and thus ensuring that propositional logic eliminates contradictions from correct thought (1989:44). It is this living and dialectical form of logic that Rowan also recognises in a dialectical approach to human inquiry.

Based on the logic of the dialectical nature of reality, Whitehead (ibid.) argues that the propositional disciplines of educational theory are inadequate to explain the dialectical nature of reality, and he presents a convincing argument of why

we need to create our living educational theories in response to questions such as “How do I improve my practice in the here and now?”.

Citing the Phadreas, Whitehead (ibid.) tells us that Socrates identified two ways of coming to know, one where things are broken down into separate components and another where we hold things together under a general idea. Thinkers who can hold together the one and the many are called dialecticians.

Holding together the one and the many is central to Coulter and Wein’s (2002) account of what makes an educational researcher a ‘judging actor’, in which they draw on the work of Hannah Arendt. Coulter and Weins (ibid.) suggest that we need to understand teaching as more than knowledge, as a form of embodied knowledge that links knowledge, virtue and reason (*phronesis* - roughly translated as judgment).

Arendt was a philosophy student whose mentor and lover was Heidegger. A Jewess, she fled Nazi Germany in 1933. Her later work included covering the trial of Eichman in 1961, in Jerusalem, as a journalist for *The New Yorker*. Her account was subsequently published as a book.<sup>28</sup> Arendt was concerned with asking questions such as “What makes an actor?” and “What makes a spectator?”. She was perturbed to understand how good thinkers, such as Heidegger, could be such poor judges, become seduced by the Nazi party and become bystanders in the atrocities that followed. Arendt (1963:57) points out the ‘mendacity’ of the German mind, evidenced in Eichman’s distorted account of reality in his suggestion that they had all “pulled together”, as though there were a mutual objective between the Nazis and Zionist leaders to manage the expulsion of Jews from Germany.

---

<sup>28</sup> Entitled *Eichman in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil*, 1963.

The writings of Arendt drew on the philosophical foundations of Western thought, combined with her admiration of Socrates, whom she regarded as holding both the role of actor and spectator effectively, and sought both to explain and prevent another holocaust.

Reviving the *poesis praxis* debate, Arendt distinguishes between labour as work and praxis as action. An Aristotelian conception of practice contrasts, on the one hand, practice as craft and, on the other, practice as praxis in the form of moral/political action, linked to the idea of leading a worthwhile life. But Arendt rejects the elitism of Aristotelian times where knowledge and virtue linked to community were the preserve of the male citizens of the ancient Greek state, along with the contemplative life that privileges the spectator over the actor. She points to the importance of others in the making and understanding of our lives (plurality) and, additionally, to the importance of human agency or freedom in action (natality). In her explanation of how the Holocaust was able to occur, she points to the expulsion of Jews from the public sphere, denying both the agency of individuals and rendering them 'invisible'.<sup>29</sup>

Coulter and Weins (2002) remind us that the question of human agency or action as freedom remains controversial and is addressed in Foucauldian thinking in terms of knowledge power complexes and in the work of Levinson, who reminds us that we are born 'belatedly' into the world. In other words, the world is not a blank canvas and as such, we are situated in the world historically, culturally and in other ways, including race and gender. However, what Arendt is arguing for in becoming a 'judging actor' is the need for public dialogue and she advocates 'visiting' the perspectives of the other. Commenting on Eichman she says:

"The longer one listened to him, the more obvious it became that his inability to speak was closely connected with an

---

<sup>29</sup> Arendt is clear that totalitarianism darkens the public sphere and limits human agency.

inability to think, namely, to think from the standpoint of somebody else. No communication was possible with him, not because he lied but because he was surrounded by the most reliable of all safeguards against the words and presence of others, and hence against reality as such” (Arendt, 1963:49).

Coulter and Weins (2002) tell us that Arendt’s public sphere is not abstract, but rather a world of diverse and unique individuals. Indeed it is this uniqueness and diversity of the *particular conditions and standpoints* that one has to go through, according to Arendt, as a judging actor, to arrive at one’s ‘general standpoint’. Furthermore, the appreciation of the diverse and the unique requires the reflective judgment of Kantian thinking.

A Kantian approach begins by rejecting the elitism inherent in the Aristotelian conception of phronesis. The categorical imperative, or the notion of the universal law, obliges everyone to do their moral duty according to that law. Determinant judgment includes political, moral and educational matters. “Judging involves using the knowledge of good ends to decide appropriate means” (Coulter and Weins, 2002:16). In educational terms, the application of theory to practice model would be an example of determinant judgment. Kant, however, distinguished another form of judgment, that being reflective judgment. Coulter and Weins (ibid.) tell us that this was “primarily concerned with aesthetic taste and inspired Arendt to generate what they suggest is a more ‘powerful conception of judgment for education’”.

In contrast to determinate judgment, where meaning is found in the general, in reflective judgment meaning is to be found in the particular. Laws and rules cannot apply the particular to the general, rather the link can be found, according to Coulter and Weins (ibid.), “in using the imagination”. Secondly, the ‘common sense’ that can be found in the general and universal is, they suggest, inherent in the critical nature of the act of reflection. They remind us, for example, that there is no community standard of beauty and that the capacity for judgment about

matters of aesthetic taste is “within the capacity of us all” and thus not subject to an elite minority. They state:

“Dialogue about reflective judgments, however, is both possible and required: aesthetic criticism presumes the possibility of persuading others of the quality of the judgment without epistemologically or ethically secure foundations. (Otherwise why bother?)” (Coulter and Weins, 2002:16).

For the teacher to be a good judging actor, this involves listening to students, visiting their points of view before, during and after the educational encounter, and recognising their ‘plurality’ and ‘natality’; in other words, their differences and desire for agency. It requires a ‘visiting imagination’, describing which Coulter and Weins say:

“Such teachers do not teach classes or grades, but individuals within complex communities; these teachers are able to judge what is appropriate - what is educational - for each child and the collective simultaneously” (2002:19).

During the course of this inquiry, I have moved towards developing my practice in this way, and I believe that my accounts of working with Margaret, Louise and other students, presented in this thesis, show how I have developed a ‘visiting imagination’.

It is the convincing logic and the aesthetic and ethical nature of the dialectical approach and dialogical form of educational action research, contained in cycles of action and reflection, facilitating the generation of living theory (informed where appropriate by relevant propositional theories), that appeals to me as a practitioner researcher as a useful means of inquiry that serves the primacy of practice.

## Rowan's Cycle: A Dialectical Account of my Inquiry

The account that follows is based on what Rowan would describe as an 'early cycle' in my research that traces my experience, thinking and motivation to change my practice, leading to the validation and initiation of the MAPOD programme.<sup>30</sup> The primary aim of drawing on this early cycle in this chapter is to put flesh on my explanation of the action research process and to illustrate how I see that process in the context of Rowan's cyclical model. The questions that frame this early cycle include:

- What is the felt perturbation in my teaching that initiates this research?
- What are the educative values that underpin my approach to teaching and learning?
- How do I understand the limits and constraints of my educative practice?

### *Being*

Starting from a felt dissatisfaction with one's current practice (this can be from *being* or *encounter* in Rowan's cycle), a dialectical engagement may involve turning away from old ways. In my case, the encounter of my teaching and learning experience on postgraduate courses in the Business School caused me immense dissatisfaction, in that I realised that by filling the heads of my students with lots of information (albeit beautifully presented in lectures and well-supported by handouts and classroom exercises) led mainly to a form of superficial learning; in other words, regurgitated for exams and essays, without any real or substantial evidence of deep learning relevant to the practical and practice questions my postgraduate Business School students faced.

---

<sup>30</sup> The site of the inquiry context in which the subsequent chapters of this thesis are based.

## *Thinking*

The thinking stage involves gathering information through conversation, literature and other means to test out ideas and consider what will work. Rowan is clear that it is not the application of ‘inert’ theory to practice, but rather a creative process of invention and testing. Rowan suggests that there is need to be decisive about when the information is ‘enough’ so that you can move forward to the project stage.

In my case, the thinking period began before I registered for the Ph.D. programme at the University of Bath.<sup>31</sup> However, my initial dissatisfaction with my teaching and learning can be traced back to 1992 when I wrote a paper.<sup>32</sup> This focused on my frustration at being told to teach a group of postgraduate practitioner students about training and development whilst being denied the right to facilitate their learning using experiential methods. For me it had raised issues concerning the effectiveness of the teaching pedagogy, and its resultant outcome of surface and rote learning contrasted with my desire to facilitate deep and meaningful learning relevant to the issues students might face in their work. In 1994, I presented a working paper<sup>33</sup> which enabled me to put into the public domain an understanding of my learning that had emerged as a result of testing out a pilot scheme using action learning, under the guise of a module entitled “Developing People and Organisations”.<sup>34</sup> The appeal was to the same type of postgraduates on the MA HRM course (though by this stage a different cohort)

---

<sup>31</sup> It was the possibility of doing research relevant to my professional practice and lived experience that drew me to the Centre for Action Research in Professional Practice, at the University of Bath, in 1996.

<sup>32</sup> For my M.A. in Management Learning, Lancaster University, 1993, called “A problem at work: the problem of developing self directed learners on the part time MA Human Resource Management course”.

<sup>33</sup> Presented to “The Capability Through Business Studies” conference held at Middlesex University, entitled “Releasing capability through action learning”.

<sup>34</sup> The action learning model involves students drawing on real life practice problems as a vehicle for learning, using reflection and action, in a small group setting with the aim of developing their understanding or achieving a change in the practice situation in line with their professional and organisational goals.

and it served to illustrate that action learning as an alternative had potential for facilitating learning and development, notwithstanding the initial resistance put up by some students and their accompanying expectations about the role of tutors and learners.

In 1996, I presented a paper to the Higher Education for Capability Conference on Professional Education and Capability (chaired by the late Donald Schön).<sup>35</sup> In this paper, I provided a critique of the professional body's proposed scheme for professional development, based on a prescriptive design for learning, in turn based upon what these practitioners should know and do. I questioned the validity of a 'sheep dip' approach, where it is assumed that one size fits all, and the lack of space in the programme to address the real work-based issues that the practitioners might face and conceivably learn from (if their experience of these issues were utilised as a form of reflection). Moreover, I was perturbed at the lack of reflection by the institute as a professional body concerning what is taught in management education; as though management theory covered objective truths about management and organisations, and that these truths had universal applicability with the assumption that learning constituted the learning about and application of these truths to practice.

Within these three papers, I had thought about issues of student autonomy, capability, learning design and the use of educative approaches (such as action learning). I also reflected on my experience, read and drew on relevant literature to further my understanding of these issues, tested out some of my ideas in practice developing a pilot module in action learning with a colleague and discussed alternative designs for learning with colleagues, arriving at a proposal for the validation of the MAPOD which was launched in 1995.

---

<sup>35</sup> Paper entitled "Shortfalls in professional education for the personnel and development practitioner: does the new IPD (Institute of Personnel and Development) route lead to capability?".



The plan was that whilst using a modular template to give some focus and direction to the programme, students would be free from the constraints of the professional body to design and take responsibility for their own learning, according to their interests and needs, using action learning as a vehicle for their learning and in particular the production of assignments as part of the Masters qualification. The role of the tutors would be facilitative. Expertise, though traditionally associated with the academic staff, was also recognised as being held within the student body and students were actively encouraged to share their expertise in the design and delivery of group sessions. Furthermore, the expertise of the tutors was also demystified by the idea that teachers could be learners too. Power sharing was seen to be a key part of this co-operative model and as part of the facilitation process students were invited to engage in a process of self, peer and tutor assessment. The action learning approach, combined with this co-operative assessment model, saw learning as a social process and with the inclusion of the large group provided an impetus for the creation of a learning community. Learning was seen as a matter of responsibility; not solely at the individual level, but as a shared responsibility between all programme participants.

The time spent working through this initial phase of enquiry prior to the MAPOD programme being launched, allowed me to develop my thinking and re-engage with the main research cycle at the point of project.

### *Project*

This stage involves the outward movement of project, where one's ideas are put to the test. Rowan (1981) talks of having good enough plans. The handbook designed for the MAPOD validation event represented such plans, not perfect, but good enough. This is what he has to say about this stage:

“This is where I take a risk, and form an intention... This may require a certain degree of assertion even aggressiveness on my part” (Rowan, 1981:88).

Working with the limitations of one’s plans and facing the contradictions they present lead to the next stage in the cycle that Rowan calls encounter.

### *Encounter*

This is the action phase in which Rowan (1981:99) suggests “I actually meet the other”. It calls for a readiness to improvise in the face unexpected reactions. He says:

“I may get confirmed or disconfirmed: and it appears, paradoxically, that disconfirmation is actually more valuable as a learning experience than is confirmation. An experience of unfreedom can be very stimulating to further effort” (Rowan, 1981:99).

In my diploma transfer paper written in 1997 for CARPP,<sup>36</sup> I reflect on and write about two examples where I experienced the negation of my values in practice. I describe a problem I faced with a colleague who was not agreeable to allowing the students to write in the first person. This issue came to a head when the first cohort were writing their dissertations. He asserted that the convention in the academy was to write in the third person, and that this practice was associated with objectivity and thus, academic validity, a perspective that I rejected as nonsense and particularly inappropriate in the MAPOD context, where personal learning and development was systemically intrinsic to the entire learning process. Writing in the first person helped students get closer to their lived experience, facilitating the reflective process in their writing and research. I was distressed by this apparent threat coming from within the MAPOD, as were those

---

<sup>36</sup> Centre for Action Research in Professional Practice.

students who had been working with me, and who had become comfortable writing in the first person, describing the experience as liberating. They were particularly afraid that their new-found liberation in the educational process would be curtailed by the power of the status quo. I was unable to reason with my colleague and it was as much as I could do to assure the students that it would be acceptable for them to continue to write in the first person, and that I was confident that the external examiner would share my perspective.

In the event, the students took the lead from their action learning set tutors, writing in whatever way they felt would be supported by their tutors and trusting in this support in the examination process. I was deeply unhappy that some students were consequently unable to express themselves as they otherwise might have done, and that this was down to a tutor using his position of power to keep things within the norm.

In addition, I wrote about the difficulties with a colleague who wanted her contribution to the learning programme designed and delivered on her terms. Despite student protests to her about the inappropriateness of a prescriptive approach on an earlier occasion, she proved to be uncompromising, putting her terms to me in writing, stating that they were non-negotiable. Specifically, she was not prepared to have her session reviewed or subject to reflection within the tutor team. To my mind, her stance undermined the co-operative basis of the programme. I reflected on this in the first instance, alone, capturing my thoughts concerning the nature of her demands and my responsibilities to the group as a whole. I concluded that one person is less important than the welfare of the group. I reviewed the situation with another colleague and we concluded that her situation was untenable. We composed a response stating “I find the conditions untenable and that if as stated your conditions are not up for negotiation, I must assume that you have withdrawn yourself from the programme” (Hartog, 1996a).

Rowan states that the period of encounter goes on until the point that one feels action is not enough, moving to a phase of withdrawal where one can begin to make sense of it all.

### *Sense Making*

The questions that Rowan (1981:99) frames: “How can I understand what I have been through?” and “What the others have been through?”, suggest that this sense making stage requires a degree of self-reflexivity on the part of the researcher. In posing these questions from one’s personal perspective and from the point of view of others, different ways of seeing the same issues may be revealed. In turn, these various perspectives can inform our considered analysis and sense making of events. Considering the wider picture, the possibility of other perspectives is a way of reducing alienation in the research process, such that the views of others are taken account of.

Central to reflexive skills of inquiry is what Rowan (2001) calls ‘maturity’, which he describes as a shift in consciousness. Suggesting a model of ego development, Rowan (2001:115) offers us an extended view of ‘normal’ psychological development theories by drawing on Wilber’s map of psycho-spiritual development toward a transpersonal consciousness. Building on this map, Rowan suggests that we go through a period of transition in our lives from symbiosis with the mother to separation, and from body/self as a child, to mental ego as an adolescent. The next stage is one where the ego matures, which he describes as the “real self”, each stage, marking a revised conception of self. Significantly, Rowan (2001:15) describes this transition as a “mystical experience”, in touch with one’s inner identity and authentic self, a “step jump” sometimes triggered by a crisis in relationships. Rowan’s thinking also draws on existential insights, central to which is the belief that we are responsible for ourselves. Drawing on the traditions of the mystics, this means a commitment to

get inside one's own experience. Importantly, Rowan (2001:120) describes the true self as an "experience", not a concept, which is what he suggests social constructionist and similar postmodern perspectives on the self state.

To return to the crisis of relationships with colleagues described above,<sup>37</sup> as I continued to reflect on the resistance of my colleague who was not agreeable to letting students write in the first person, I began to understand better the reasoning behind his resistance, i.e. his fear of the status quo pronouncing that the practice was 'un-academic' and the consequent risk he perceived of his status as an academic being undermined. Although I did not agree with his position, I did begin to appreciate it and, in turn, his need for caution. I began to experience myself as a dialectician holding together these many positions whilst at the same time striving to protect the overall integrity of the programme. I came to realise in working with him subsequently, that I would need to work with our differences and work to educate him about the efficacy of my practice.

As for my other colleague, I could see her argument for wanting to keep her session(s) intact, but I remained unhappy about her unwillingness to work this through with students. Taking these perspectives into account, I agreed with colleagues to invite her to put her specific contribution to the students, up front, at the beginning of the programme, as a self-contained package, which they could choose as a group to buy into or not, whilst removing the opportunity that previously existed whereby she tended to impose her will against the will of the majority.

Looking back at this initial cycle, my experience of contradiction was focused on having my values denied in practice by my colleagues. I was less aware initially of the immaturity of my ego defences, and it was a while before I could place my

---

<sup>37</sup> During the first cycle of my inquiry.

'I' at the centre of my inquiry in a truly reflexive way and embrace myself as a living contradiction.

### *Communication*

The final stage in the research cycle is communication. Moving outward again this may involve forms of communication with oneself, others who were involved and others not involved. The challenge is being able to explain what has happened to oneself and others, appreciating that there may be different and multiple perspectives, and communicating in ways appropriate to the research context.

In my case, communication involved firstly dealing with the practical issues that the contradictions gave rise to within the team through discussion and correspondence. Then writing research notes for myself, in which I captured the lived experience of contradiction that these issues created in me, the partiality of my perspective, initial reactions and sense making of the events.<sup>38</sup> The rhythm of these six moments within the dialectical research cycle moves the inquiry on and, as Rowan suggests, we can get stuck in any one of these moments.

Between the writing of my diploma transfer paper (Hartog, 1997) and the submission of my M.Phil. transfer paper (Hartog, 2000b), I experienced a feeling of being stuck, unable to communicate the progress of my inquiry. This was largely due to my experience of submitting and failing the diploma on my first submission, experienced as a judgment without explanation or feedback about why. This experience left me feeling anxious, with low self-esteem, blocked as a writer and overwhelmed by the concern that I was not good enough. Only the life

---

<sup>38</sup> Later drawn out in my diploma transfer paper.

affirming relationship I had with my tutor persuaded me otherwise, encouraging me to write and to risk putting myself back into the public domain.

It was this experience that led to the framing of my M.Phil. transfer paper (Hartog, 2000b) as ‘finding voice in the academy’, which has emerged as a key theme in my inquiry and in this thesis.

### **Validity in ‘Educational’ Action Research**

Lomax (1994:14) defines validity in her professorial inaugural lecture as about being able to make a plausible case for one’s research claims before an educated audience of peers. She suggests that subjective data, in the sense of teachers researching their own practice, is more difficult to work with than conventionally termed objective data and demands a higher level of skill from the teacher researcher (she uses the term teacher to cover those who teach children in school and those teaching adults in higher education).

Whitehead (1989) reminds us that validity is important in all research because fundamentally it is concerned with the generation and testing of theory. He suggests that the researcher needs to know what the unit of appraisal is and what the standards of judgment are in order to test a claim to educational knowledge. Furthermore, he suggests that the unit of appraisal “is the individual’s claim to know his or her educational development” (1989:46); included in that unit of appraisal would be methodological, logical, ethical and aesthetic standards to judge the validity of the knowledge claims. Commenting on the validity of what we claim, Lomax (1986) suggests that it is the degree to which it is useful or relevant in guiding practice and whether the claim precipitates a debate about improving practice in the wider community.

Significantly, Lomax distinguishes herself as a professor of educational research and not a professor of research in education. Lomax is a champion of the teacher research movement in the United Kingdom and like Whitehead (1989) believes that the research model of social science is not appropriate to educational researchers. Educational research, for Lomax, is primarily research done by people who practice in education (whether that be in a school, higher education institution or in a management education context in industry). Also in her professorial inaugural lecture, Lomax (1994:14) additionally identifies nine features that characterise educational research, as follows:

1. *It is always tentative*, in that education by its very nature is a continuous process, in which 'truth' known at a given point in time may be subject to change.
2. *It has an ethical dimension*, addressing its own research motives and explaining what is meant by improvement, through a continuous critique of personal and professional values.
3. *It is self-developing*, enabling the researcher to produce their own form of 'living educational theory' through questions of the kind 'How do I improve my practice'?
4. *It is practical*, in that it improves our practice, regardless of whether we are concerned to improve something that is practical or a theoretical concern in her practice.
5. *It is authentic*, in that it has resonance for other practitioners, who can empathise with the values that underpin the research.
6. *It is democratic*, in that it evidences empowering relationships with others in the research process, enabling the 'other' to influence the research and speak for themselves.
7. *It has rigour*, in that the case is coherent and the claims and evidence are plausible.



8. *It is holistic*, both in the motivation to improve our practice and the development of our competence as an educational action researcher.
9. *It is influential*, in that our values and research practice is shared and disseminated in the public domain, with the purpose of persuading others about the significance of the work that we do.

These characteristics of what makes educational action research have provided the template for my standards of judgment presented at the beginning of this thesis.

In a later paper, Lomax (1999) suggests that a double dialectic of meaning making is the hallmark of valid action research. This involves writing as a sense making activity for oneself and writing as a sense making activity for others. The first concerns how we make meaning to ourselves as we grapple with the representation of inquiry and practice, for example in the narrative accounting of our inquiry. The other side of the dialectical relationship, concerned with our representation to others, for example in the presentation of conference papers, serves to co-opt our peers as an audience of critical friends, invited to give feedback on the robustness or otherwise, of the claim(s) to know. In this regard processes of sense making and communication in Rowan's model may converge.

By writing papers for academic conferences, I have been able to test out my thinking in the public domain in the course of this inquiry, and in the form of this double dialectic of meaning making that Lomax suggests. Critical friendship helps the researcher to think differently, see differently and, in turn, act differently. It is an educative process that helps make educational action research educative and facilitates the 'judging actor'.

The process of the double dialectic of meaning making also has similarities with the 'judging spectator' identified by Arendt, linking thinking and sense making,

through reflection, with communication and future action. During the trial of Eichman for his war crimes, Arendt (1963) observed that Eichman had refused to think outside of the prescribed regulations and orders that were issued, and she concluded that it was this lack of thinking rather than an innate evilness or stupidity that resulted in his complicit behaviour. To develop the skills of the judging spectator requires what Arendt calls “a two in one dialogue with the self”, a process which I locate in reflection as “a dialogue of myself with myself... in which I am both the one who asks and the one who answers” (Arendt, cited in Coulter and Weins, 2002:19).

This type of reflective thinking is temporary and, according to Arendt, involves a return to the world to defend an assessment. Arendt’s conception of the judging spectator, like that of her judging actor, is a dialectical one.

Using Rowan’s (1981) model of ‘a dialectical engagement with the world’, what I have described is what Rowan would call an early cycle rather than what traditionally would have been called a pilot study; in some accounts of action research it is referred to as a reconnaissance exercise (intelligence gathering in order to plan an action to be taken).

Rowan (1981:105) suggests that the cyclical model makes it easier to grasp multiple cycles of inquiry. These cycles of inquiry ‘knit together’ to form this thesis. They are identified along with key conference papers which I have written, publications, and my diploma and the M.Phil. transfer papers,<sup>39</sup> all of which have informed the writing of this thesis. Indeed, this writing has enabled me to make sense of my inquiry for myself, test out my thinking in the public domain, and given way to emergent themes captured in my recent publications and in the construction of this thesis.

---

<sup>39</sup> Presented to The Centre For Action Research at the University of Bath.

To summarise, in this section I have presented an account of my approach to the research, drawing on Rowan's cycle of a dialectical engagement with the world to illustrate the nature of my research journey. Furthermore, I have explained what a dialectical approach means to me in respect of a self study of my practice as an educational action researcher and asserted the logic of question "How can I improve my practice?". I have shown what I understand to be a disciplined approach to educational action research, as put forward by Lomax (1999:4), "the idea of a discipline is distinguished by ways of thinking, theorising, practicing or enquiring which is the thing itself", drawing on the ideas of others to support my account.

### ***Method and Process Issues in Theory – Writing and 'Data' in This Inquiry***

#### **Introduction**

In this section I address the key issues pertaining to an action research approach, starting with the examination of the role of theory and literature, in order to highlight the distinctive difference in their use in an action research account compared with their use in a more traditional approach to research and the consequent construction and presentation of a thesis. I then explore the process of writing this account, with particular reference to the role of life story and history in the construction of my thesis.

Next, I explore my process of data gathering, with respect to the methodological issues involved in gathering evidence from which I assert my claims to know my embodied values in practice. This includes oral and visual data in respect of my teaching and learning relationships with particular students on the MAPOD programme, which I used to help address the questions "To what extent I am

living my values in action?” and “How can I improve my practice?” By providing evidence in a visual form of representation (as an alternative and complement to the traditional narrative forms contained in a thesis), my aim is to show you moments in my practice which capture the living inquiry process and through which I develop my connoisseur’s eye with the purpose of creating loving and life affirming educative relations.

### **The Role of Theory and Literature in an Action Research Account**

Literature serves to inform us what others have written and are writing in the field, so what is its role in an action research inquiry? Winter (1997) asks the question “Where does ‘theory’ come from in action research?”. As he asks this question he poses a concern about the relationship between theory and practice, and he problematises the vested interest of universities in drawing cultural authority from the separation of theory from practice and the concerns of practitioners. He tells us that theory in action research “is a form of improvisatory self-realisation” (1997:2), where theoretical resources are not predicted in advance, but are drawn in by the process of the inquiry. This is because the focus can shift in the action research process as an inquiry develops. He further suggests that unlike conventional research, the theory in an action research account does not come mainly from the initial review of “the literature” but rather from “a process of improvisation as we draw on different aspects of our prior professional and general knowledge” (1997:2).

Therefore, ideas drawn from the work of others are not presented as a body of knowledge at the outset, against which my inquiry is benchmarked. Rather, the literature review *per se* has evolved in the course of my inquiry process, enabling me to improvise and draw on different ideas in response to issues and questions arising from my inquiry into my teaching and learning relationships. For example, ‘maternal thinking’ (Ruddick, 1989) provided me with a useful

heuristic device, whilst I reflected on what it was about maternal knowing that seemed relevant and important to my inquiry; as in the case of Louise who features in Chapter Nine,<sup>40</sup> where the decision to work with her on a one-to-one basis outside the action learning set was driven in part by a recognition which came from my own maternal knowing that with one-to-one support she might make the developmental strides she was struggling with (nurturing being a key principle of maternal thinking). I sensed that this kind of attention might facilitate Louise's development in helping her find her voice and achieve the clarity in her thinking and writing that she had been struggling with hitherto, partly because she needed more time and attention than that which was available in the action learning set.

Literature in action research thus becomes integrated in and for action, because as Winter suggests, in action research "we must decide how best to intervene here and now" (1997:3), taking account of our specific professional values and purposes, thus making informed choices about what ideas are to be incorporated, without descending into prescriptive authority and keeping dialectical pluralism and openness toward emergent possibilities in the inquiry. Furthermore, Winter links theory and citizenship in a democracy, linking the rights of citizens with responsibilities. Finally, he suggests that action research generates its own form of theory describing it as follows:

"This is a form of theory which is integrative, critical, and political; it is both personal and collective, a synthesis of values and understandings, and a response to the many methodological dimensions of practical action in complex organisations profoundly influenced by external political forces. It is a form of theory which is required for the full exercise of a citizen's responsibilities in the workplace, and it is also a form of theory that the university must embrace and sponsor if it is to retain its aspiration to be a place of critical reason in a social and political order which threatens the independence of the university through the very same political and economic forces

---

<sup>40</sup> Entitled "Developing a connoisseur's eye".

which threaten the humanity of other workplaces” (Winter, 1997:4).

In a living theory thesis, the emphasis is on the descriptions and explanations of my own living theory guided by a desire to live out my values in practice. In part, my living theory is informed by the work of others where the writing and ideas of others speak to and affirm my own values, beliefs and experience, thus becoming a means of supporting and validating my own living theory approach. The ideas of others have also served to extend my understanding and move my inquiry forward. In Chapter Three,<sup>41</sup> I examine the work of Belenky *et al.* (1986), and in the course of constructing my thesis I also draw on the work of significant others including Freire (1972, 1985), Gilligan (1982), Noddings (1994) and Ruddick (1980, 1989),<sup>42</sup> with the aim of showing how their work has helped me address my central question “How do I improve my practice as a university educator?”. In addition, I will show how their ideas have inspired, informed and illuminated my understanding in this inquiry and moved it forward. Freire, writing on the act of study, says:

“When reading a book, we subject readers should be receptive to any passage that triggers a deeper reflection on any topic, even if it is not the main subject of the book. Sensing a possible relationship between the read passage and our core-occupation, we as good readers should concentrate on analyzing the text looking for a connection between the main idea and our own interest” (1985:3).

I first read the above passage in about 1992, whilst studying for my MA in Management Learning. I realised then that we do not come to a text as a *tabula rasa*, but rather as one full of experience. Having read Freire, I began to understand why some ideas and the writing of others resonated with me, and why some did not. Since then, I have preferred to read and engage with those texts that I can resonate with, that I feel in the reading both speak to me and

---

<sup>41</sup> “Women’s ways of knowing: a review and critique’.

<sup>42</sup> All of whom influenced the thinking of Belenky *et al.*

enable me to connect in some way the ideas of the author with my own. I have been more resistant to texts that do not engage me in this way, although I have persevered with less accessible texts during the course of this inquiry, knowing that ideas such as Habermas' theory of communicative action are relevant to my inquiry, even though the text itself is difficult.

In reading and drawing on the ideas of others, I have read several of the key texts and articles which I draw on in this thesis, several times over, during the past six years, each time gaining new meaning and a deeper understanding and appreciation of the text. As an aid to my reading as inquiry, I have noted down those connections between the ideas of the author and my own interest. I have amassed in the process a collection of notebooks and files of my reading with quotations from the literature and my accompanying notes and points of connection. These notebooks have been a useful resource in constructing my written accounts.

### **Writing as Inquiry**

Reference is frequently made in 'how to' accounts to do action research and to the action research report, which assumes the findings are written up at the end. In this case, writing has been an important part of the process of my inquiry and sense making. Writing has enabled me to test out my ideas reflectively in the public domain, as well as providing a means of communicating those ideas and findings to others. Richardson suggests that "writing is not just a mopping up activity at the end of a research project" (1994:516). She describes writing as "a way of 'knowing' - a method of discovery and analysis" (ibid.); in other words, writing as a creative and dynamic process. Richardson tells us that form and content are not separable and that through writing we may discover new aspects of our topic of inquiry and our relationship to it. This perspective certainly resonates with my experience of writing during the process of my inquiry and in

the construction of this thesis. For example, when I constructed my M.Phil. transfer papers I framed the chapters using poetry. Richardson suggests that the language of poetic form has more immediacy, and as I reflect back on this, I can recall the underlying emotional process and vulnerability I felt in writing that account as I put my voice into the public domain. In addition, in writing about the personal basis of my history and knowing, I have been moved to explore possible connections between my personal and professional life. In exploring the process of reflection involved in critical action learning and research, I have been moved to explore the opportunities this may facilitate for teaching business ethics. Richardson reminds us that there is no one right way to stage a text; rather, like clay, we might view writing as material with which to craft and mould our account, being mindful of the audience we address and its conventions.

Lomax (1999) suggests that there are two complementary ways that we make meaning in the action research process. The first concerns how we make meaning to ourselves as we grapple with the representation of our inquiry and practice; for example, in narrative accounts of our inquiry. The other side of the dialectical relationship is concerned with the representation of meaning to others; for example, the feedback we get from critical friends in response to our written accounts. In my case, this would include feedback on conference papers and papers submitted to publications. Such feedback has helped me grapple with issues in my inquiry and to appreciate my own living theory in the process.<sup>43</sup> These processes, particularly the role of critical friends in responding to written

---

<sup>43</sup> For example, an e-mail from Professor Rosenfeld (one of the authors of *Artisans of Democracy*) in response to my paper presented to the Second International Conference on Reflective Practice, “Maternal thinking a legitimate discourse for educational practice; making a difference”, suggests that he resonated with the three facets presented in the paper on maternal thinking, but he thought I had presented the heart of the matter in too implied a manner and not enough in actionable terms, thus giving me something to chew over both in terms of working with this aspect of my inquiry in the writing of this thesis and for any future publication about which he was encouraging.



accounts, serve to confront the educational action researcher with what he/she knows. In my case, critical friendship has challenged me to rethink and reframe my perspective, dig deeper and be more reflective and inquiring as I account for myself, as well as serving to affirm my understanding of my inquiry. Critical friendship foregrounds the dialogical process helping the educational action researcher to see differently and act differently. It is an educative process. In turn, new insights that emerge through this process may enable me to change and improve my practice.

During my first cycle of inquiry I was unsure where to begin or what to write. Golberg suggests that if you want to learn to write “go home” (1986:143); this is what she says:

“It is very important to go home if you want your work to be whole. You don’t have to move in with your parents again and collect a weekly allowance, but you must claim where you come from and look deeply in to it. Come to honor and embrace it, or at the least, accept it” (Golberg, 1986:143).

In my case, Goldberg’s injunction gave me permission to embrace autobiographical writing, and during the course of this inquiry I have written three distinct autobiographical pieces. The first, written in March 1996, served to construct a life story (Hartog, 1996b), beginning with my parents meeting each other in Scotland in the mid-fifties, my childhood experience of living and growing up in the West Midlands, to my employment at Middlesex University in 1990, and the creation of MAPOD in 1995. In this account, I describe learning from experience as an “underlying value in my approach to my work” and suggest that “personal learning is a prerequisite to being able to bring about learning for others in the organisation” (Hartog, 1996b:19). Professor Judi Marshall<sup>44</sup> responded to this first account as “competent but not yet revealing my

---

<sup>44</sup> Professor Judi Marshall, at the Centre for Action Research in Professional Practice, University of Bath.

edges". It felt competent to me and yet I could, through her feedback, see how it was contained, carefully packaged but not loose or deep enough, and her comments caused me to wonder what my edges might be. The second account, written as part of my M.Phil. transfer paper in September 2000 (Hartog, 2000b), was an attempt to dig deeper and reveal more clearly the values that had influenced me in my formative years, and to make more explicit the links I believed explained my values and stance towards truth, justice and democracy between my personal and professional life. At the time, I was still unsure as to whether and to what extent I was revealing these edges to my reader. In both accounts I spoke of taboos, in particular, experiences that served to silence; in other words, experiences that deny voice and create forms of oppression.

Silence and voice has emerged as a theme of this inquiry, both for me and for many of my students. More recently, in April 2003, I wrote a piece called "Choices and self-determination", which I have included as Chapter Four in this thesis. While writing this account, I realised that the stories told informed me about my quest for self, helping me realise the origins of 'my still small voice' (Belenky *et al.*, 1986) and 'the roar behind my silence' (*ibid.*), ideas which inform the subsequent discussion of these two stories. In constructing this thesis, this latter example of autobiographical writing has revealed stories that hitherto had been experienced as undiscussible. This feeling of undiscussibility is, I now suggest, significant to the overall tenor of critique that I want to bring to this thesis, for if something is experienced as undiscussible, it belies speaking truth to power. I believe my edges are now more transparent.

After writing this latest piece, I reflected for a while on why families keep secrets, which in turn led me to think about organisational undiscussibles (Agyris 1990) and how those in authority tend to try to keep the lid on things, how confidentiality and loyalty tests are sometimes used in the employment relationship to keep things quiet, or indeed place the decisions of those in

authority beyond question. We have seen this principle at work recently within central government, in its relationship with the late Dr. Kelly in respect of the Iraq dossier.

If action research is to play a part in changing the social formation then I believe that organisational undiscussibles need to be addressed if we are to bring a critique into practice, opening and creating a space in which alternative conceptions of truth may be aired and a space through which organisational learning may occur. I begin to do this in Chapter Five.<sup>45</sup> I return to this point in the Chapter Ten.<sup>46</sup>

Freire (1985:17) tells us that becoming critical is “to see reality as it is”. In other words, critique involves the process of political literacy or in Freirian terminology ‘conscientization’:

“...the process by which human beings participate critically in a transforming act... One of the important points in conscientization is to provoke recognition of the world, not as a ‘given’ world, but as a world dynamically ‘in the making’” (Freire, 1985:106).

Thus, in educating the social formation there are choices, i.e. to speak as one finds, to be an actor or to hold silence and be a spectator.

My energy was further harnessed by a writing activity called “writing down the bones”, a technique suggested by Goldberg (1986:8) in which the rule of thumb is to keep the pen on the page and the words flowing spontaneously for say 45 minutes at a time. I used this activity frequently to capture my thoughts and feelings about my lived experience on the MAPOD programme. In particular, I

---

<sup>45</sup> Entitled “Finding voice in the academy: towards a politics of articulation, contesting power in the academy from an oppositional site”

<sup>46</sup> Called “Educating the social formation”.

often wrote in this way early in the morning on MAPOD residentials or when I returned home at the end of a residential week, in order to capture the rawness and immediacy of that experience. This has been my way of keeping a field diary. I would then refer to these notes and draw on them as I constructed more formalised accounts and conference papers.

### **Recording Data: Using Audio and Videotapes to Gather Data**

In this section I want to explore and report on how I recorded and made sense of data using audio and videotapes in my inquiry. The purpose of recording the data was to capture something more fully than words and narrative recollections alone would yield in respect of my lived experience of teaching and learning relationships with students on the MAPOD programme.

I always try to record the action learning set meetings, in particular, the check-in, and where possible, I record the community dialogue sessions using a tape recorder.<sup>47</sup> I believe it is important that I am as fully engaged in the process at the time as I should be; otherwise, I would be placing myself on the edge of the group as a participant observer which I am not, I am part of the process I seek to observe. By listening carefully to the tapes I can hear how we were together, I am more aware of who spoke and who did not, what my part was in the conversation, whether I made facilitative interventions that were in keeping with the purposes of the meeting and my values in action, or whether my interventions denied those values. Listening to the tapes in-between set meetings allows me to compose myself and be more prepared for the next session.

I explain why I use the tape, what purpose I intend to use it for and I ask permission both to tape the session and to draw on the material/data collected in

---

<sup>47</sup> Because there is much going on at the time and it is difficult to attend to everything.

my writing and inquiry. Specifically, I have drawn on material from these tapes in Chapter Nine.

I encourage students to tape their own individual sessions. Mostly, students have come to appreciate the use of the tape for their own inquiries, some preferring to bring their own tape recorder to tape their sessions, so that they may recapture the flavour of the conversation and feedback given to them about their writing as they construct their assignments. If a student does not have their own tape recorder, but wants a taped record of their session, then I give them the tape. Sometimes, I ask them to let me have it when they have finished with it, or they offer me the tape later, especially when we have been able to acknowledge in our 'check-out' that something special happened in the process in the learning relationship. This was certainly the case in the one-to-one sessions I had with Louise, captured later in the body of this thesis.<sup>48</sup>

### **Reconnecting With the Data**

I have re-listened to tapes before writing a number of the chapters in this thesis. By doing so, I have been able to re-engage and recapture in my mind the moments of encounter, and the mood and flavour of the meetings. Whilst reconnecting with the data I am reminded of the room that we were in, the lightness or darkness, whether I felt comfortable or not, how we were sat together, whether we were at Hendon (the Business School) or at Hunton Park (the residential centre), my home or the home of a student. I am more able to rediscover how I felt about the meeting, the impression it had on me and my awareness of the impression it had on others. In short, whether the experience was felt to be positive.

---

<sup>48</sup> I have been using the tape recorder since the first MAPOD cohort, with the consent of those present.

In the later stages of my inquiry whilst working with students on MAPOD Cohorts 4 and 5, I introduced a video recorder to some of the action learning set meetings, again with the permission and agreement of those concerned. Audiotapes were still made for individuals to reflect and listen to their sessions and to use in the construction of their assignments. My aim in introducing the videotape was to capture what the audiotape could not, that being the visual aspects of the embodied relationship between us. In other words, I wanted to be able to see how I was with the students and how we were together, again giving me the chance to examine more closely whether, and to what extent, I was living or denying my values in practice.

The act of video recording is more intrusive than the audiotape. I was not sure if students would be comfortable with it, but on the whole members of my action learning sets on MAPOD 4 and MAPOD 5 were agreeable to me using this means as a record for my own inquiry. However, I would point out that, in both cases, I introduced the videotape towards the end of the second year, when I believed my relationship with the students was fairly well established and when I thought there was the necessary trust in place between us to warrant that degree of intrusion. There was, however, one occasion during an action learning set meeting when an individual asked for the tape to be turned off. This followed a tense moment of encounter in the teaching and learning relationship when I had pressed the student to address how she would account for herself reflectively in her dissertation. I had become concerned that her proposed evaluation of her project would be normative, lacking a critique of practice and of the managerial discourse that framed it.

Looking back at the tape, I sensed her perturbation and discomfort with my challenge prior to her request for the tape to be turned off. This reviewing of the tape gave me the opportunity to think and reflect whether I could have made that experience more meaningful and less threatening for the student. Could I, for

example, have tempered my challenging disposition with more careful facilitation, perhaps even inviting the other set members present to help her explore my question and at the same time dissolve the anxiety that my challenge seemed to create? If I had, I would undoubtedly have lived my values more fully in my practice than I did so on that occasion.

Harper (1994:406) discussing “the authority of the visual image”, points out that Bateson and Mead (1942), whose studies of Balinese culture are legendary, only turned to the camera some ten years into their study. “Their theories of the group they studied were correspondingly complex and grounded in anthropological knowledge” (Harper (1994:406). In my case, I had developed a degree of trust and intimacy with each student whose sessions I videotaped and in some cases I had already written about my situated experience with them, individually or collectively, before turning to the tape. I want to suggest that my theories are grounded in my lived experience of working with these students.

These tapes exist as a permanent record of moments in the teaching and learning relationship. They help me compose and construct more honest accounts of renderings of these moments. The tapes have forced me to look more carefully at my initial interpretation of events and to see things in the learning relationship that are not initially seen or appreciated from my point of view, as with the example given above.

### **Embodied Knowledge: Values in Action**

My claim to originality is based on a living theory account of my inquiry into my own educational practice, for example, in Chapter Nine,<sup>49</sup> I draw on evidence from these videotapes in the form of edited clips. My purpose in bringing these

---

<sup>49</sup> Entitled “Developing a connoisseur’s eye: exploring the aesthetics of my teaching and learning relationships on MAPOD”.

visual images to the fore in my thesis is to give you a glimpse, an insight into my practice, so that you can step into my shoes for a moment, guided by my narrative account, to see for yourself some examples of my inquiry in action. In particular, I want to show how my embodied knowledge has guided my values in action, and where in my inquiry I have experienced myself as a living contradiction in the process of my teaching and learning relationships.

When I start the tape I do not know what is going to happen, and I do not even necessarily know what I have captured, nor its meaning or significance to my inquiry. Therefore, viewing the tape becomes part of my inquiry process, the benchmark being my purposes and espoused values. It is in asking the question “How am I living my espoused values in action?”, as I view the tape, that leads me to make sense of it, and to realise what is significant to me, as I can re-experience the evidence to see whether I am living or denying my values in practice. Not knowing what the data has to say until you engage with it is potentially risky. I have learnt to trust the process, anticipating that something useful will be realised from taped sessions of action learning set meetings that last on average three or four hours. Yet this wealth of raw data is itself challenging, as it takes time and often several viewings to decide what it is that you are drawn to and what the significance is of the data that you are selecting and/or rejecting. In the process, I have found myself consciously asking “why am I focused on this particular image?”. I also find myself checking that I am working with the data, by this I mean following its internal logic and not editing it at random to make it fit into a predetermined category.

### **Focusing and Drawing Out Meaning From the Data**

The editing process that I have adopted is guided by the purposes of the particular session. Viewing the whole tape helps me relive the session and the sense making emerges in the context of the whole. That includes the particular



action learning set, the learning relationship with particular individuals and with the set as a whole. When I do this systematically I do not have to search for categories, they seem to emerge by themselves in the process. I think this is because I have lived within the data and am passionately connected to the learning relationships that organise and give meaning to those experiences the videotape has captured. But the intimacy does not make the editing process easy.

The paradox of not knowing also means that the quality of attention needed to view the tapes and select and edit the data is such that I have spent whole days viewing and reviewing the tapes. In the first instance I view the tapes, letting the data wash over me, attending lightly with a hint of detached curiosity about what I see and notice about the session. This part of my inquiry involves a kind of 'reverie', a psychodynamic technique (White, 2002). Through this kind of reverie I am able to review the visual data "allowing the nuances of the working alliance to illuminate my conscious awareness" (Hartog and Winstanley, 2002). On the second and subsequent viewings I tend to revisit the notes that I made of the session(s), checking them against my thoughts and recollections as I ask myself "what is going on here?" and consider whether I am living or denying my values in practice.

I then revisit my purposes before selecting or editing any clips. In practice, this process takes place over a period of months: in-between times, I let my impressions sit or settle as I get on with writing the related chapters, revisiting the tapes if I am unsure about what I am trying to say or the veracity of the claims that I am making. As I work through the tapes I begin to see chunks of meaning emerging from the data, and it is in relation to these chunks of meaning that I cut and select the clips, relocating the edited video images within my narrative account.

I have attempted to describe and explain the tapes' relevance and the purpose I believe they serve in illustrating my thesis. In addition, I have attempted to provide the background and detail that will help you to appreciate their significance and meaning as I do. I have at times felt torn by the editing process, deciding what images to include and what to leave out, and wrestling with the problem of how best to do justice to the nature of embodied knowledge in my inquiry account. What I have to be satisfied with is the synthesis I can offer you of my inquiry through the aid of visual representation.

Of course, the danger here is that there may be bias. In fact I am sure there is. Someone else viewing the tapes may well see other things from their point of view, but I am not trying to produce a thesis of collaborative inquiry. Yes, there are many instances of collaboration in the MAPOD process, but this thesis is an account of my living theory as a tutor in higher education, and as such it is primarily an account from my point of view.

I must acknowledge Judi Marshall's (1981) account of "Making senses as personal process", in which she shares her reflections of working with interview data, collecting it and making sense of it. Her account provided me with the stimulus to reflect on my own process of working with audio and videotaped data.

## **Summary**

Firstly, in this chapter, I have defined action research drawing on the emancipatory traditions of critical theory, considered the increasing influence of reflective practice within this approach to human inquiry and identified the need for caution and critique in both cases. I have also identified the role of the individual practitioner in action research, distinguishing it as a personal and human endeavour in which one individual sets out to act in the best interests of

the other. I have explored how such a personal endeavour requires an understanding of the world from one's own point of view, drawing on Polanyi's (1962) insights on the importance of personal knowledge in research, which is central to the creation and legitimation of one's own living theory. Following Polanyi, I have drawn on the concept of connoisseurship in order to help me name the aesthetic and tacit knowledge involved in the action reflection process of my research; the purpose of which is to improve the rationality and justice of my teaching and learning relationships.

Secondly, I have explained what I understand a dialectical engagement with the world to be, placing my 'I' as the subject and object at the centre of my inquiry, as a teacher in higher education examining my own practice. I have framed my research as being concerned with social change in that it involves a search for the right questions appropriate to my teaching and learning relationships benchmarked against my educative values. I have argued that educational action research, though addressing questions that all good teachers address, is more than good teaching in that it involves systematic enquiry made public. In addition, I have addressed the nature of the action research cycle itself, reiterating the dialogic process of question and answer as it emerges in spirals of action and reflection. In explaining this process, I have attempted to show what it means to be a dialectician, holding together the one and the many, and the related importance of others in the making and understanding of our lived experience. In terms of my inquiry, I have identified the importance of others' perspectives, dialogue with students and the imperative of the educational researcher to see things from the other's point of view, and in doing so, learnt to honour and recognise the need for human agency in the other. Using Rowan's (1981) cycle of action research in a dialectical way, I have mapped my initial cycle of inquiry addressing the following questions:

- What is the felt perturbation in my teaching that initiates this research?
- What are the educative values that underpin my approach to teaching and learning?
- How do I understand the limits and constraints of my educative practice?

I then drew this section to a close by examining issues of validity in action research.

Finally, I have addressed issues of approach and method that are distinctive to action research. In particular, the role of theory in action research and the role of literature and writing in this inquiry. Specifically, I have discussed my process of recording and making sense of data in this inquiry, and specifically the role of visual evidence as an alternative form of representation in this thesis, enabling me to benchmark what I see evidenced in my practice against my espoused values, exposing the contradictions of my practice and enabling me to ask what I need to do in order to live my values more fully in my practice in those particular learning relationships.

## CHAPTER THREE: WOMEN'S WAYS OF KNOWING: A REVIEW AND CRITIQUE

In this chapter I aim to provide a review and critique of *Women's Ways of Knowing: The Development of Self, Voice and Mind* (Belenky et al., 1986).<sup>50</sup> The ideas that this book have given rise to are especially relevant to this thesis. I first read this book within a few years of its initial publication. Its ideas had resonance for me and gave me the tools to describe my own learning history. Furthermore, I believe it shaped my emergent 'living theory' of what developmental education required, in turn, influencing the design of the MAPOD, in respect of an approach to learning based on a community of learners. During my inquiry, I have read this book many times, developing with each reading a deeper understanding of the text, helping me clarify over time how I could improve my practice.

I begin with an introduction and overview of the study that forms the basis of this book, and then develop a more fulsome account of the five epistemological perspectives that shape the order of presentation of this book. In doing so, I aim to help the reader who may be unfamiliar with this work to gain an appreciation and understanding of how it has influenced my research. I develop my account by explaining how these perspectives resonated for me, and by providing a glimpse of how they helped me understand and know myself better as a learner. In addition, I indicate where they have influenced my thinking and living theory as a professional educator. By placing myself as knower within the text, I hope to show how the reading of this book and its subsequent review and critique was for me, not an activity of detached intellectual curiosity, used to produce a traditional literature review, but rather a process of engagement with ideas in which I as a knower was intimately connected and attached to that which was

---

<sup>50</sup> Hereinafter in this chapter referred to as *WWK*.

also known to and communicated by others. The reading of this book began a relationship with those ideas that the authors brought into the public domain, leading to a personal and organisational learning trajectory of transformation. Finally, I will address issues of critique, drawing out in particular some of the key criticisms brought to light in the work of Goldberger *et al.* (1996).

## **Introduction**

Belenky *et al.* (1986) describe ways of knowing that women reported to them, based on their individual life experiences. In the process, the authors identified particular ways of knowing that women have cultivated and valued, ways of knowing, they argue, that have been denigrated and neglected by the dominant intellectual ethos of our time. These ways of knowing, claim the authors, though gender related, are not gender specific, thus suggesting that whilst these ways of knowing might be held in common by women, they are also accessible to men. Their research involved intensive interviews with 135 women from higher education and the wider social sphere.

In developing their theory of knowledge, Belenky *et al.* were concerned to understand 'how women know what they know'. They believed that what women considered to be truth and reality affects the way in which they see the world, including perceptions of self, and views of teaching and learning. The book shows how women's self concepts and ways of knowing are intertwined. Epistemology is presented as an organising framework of the book.

They describe five epistemological perspectives from which women view reality and draw conclusions about truth, knowledge and authority. Moreover, they show how women struggle to claim the power of their own minds.

The context of this study needs to be appreciated in respect of what had gone before and the growing awareness that, in the majority of social science research, there had been a distinct absence of women, not least because academic research traditionally was conducted in universities, populated predominantly by male students.

The starting point for the authors had been Perry's work (1970) on intellectual and ethical development.<sup>51</sup> Perry identified stages of development in intellectual and ethical thought. Significantly, this included a shift from dualism to multiplicity – the ability to differentiate between right and wrong, giving way to a multiplicity of perspectives. He also noted that students move beyond dependence on authority towards a position where they hold their own opinion. Beyond that, he recorded a stage of development which he called 'full relativism', in which meaning and context are relative. At this stage, the student appreciates that knowledge is constructed, not given; contextual, not absolute; mutable, not fixed.

Significantly, the authors of *WWK*, in contrast to Perry (1970), reported *perspectives* on ways of knowing, not stages of development and they reported *differences* in the ways of knowing not present in Perry's study. The authors state that their wish is to *share* their findings, not *prove* anything.

That women speak in a different voice was not entirely a new concept. Gilligan (1977) showed that women differed from men in their orientation. She showed that women's moral development was more likely to be marked and differentiated by concerns about care, responsibilities and connectedness, whereas rights, autonomy and separateness were characteristic of men's approach to moral thinking, decision-making and action. *WWK* thus serves to

---

<sup>51</sup> Conducted at Harvard, an ivy league university in the United States, populated by male students.

extend the work of Perry and Gilligan, thus extending our knowledge of theories of knowing.

Additionally, *WWK* was groundbreaking in that it studied women from diverse backgrounds. As well as samples of women from the university population (the traditional source of participants and informants in social science research), the authors specifically included women from what they termed ‘the invisible colleges’. By contrast, these women were outside the formal higher education system and compared to students in higher education the women from the ‘invisible colleges’ had limited formal education. Generally, these women came from poor and working class backgrounds. They tended to need social support and instruction on parenting skills, which the ‘invisible colleges’ provided. Significantly, therefore, there was diversity in terms of class differences, education and life experience in the sample that informed this study. This particular feature of the research design is not insignificant, because by including women from such diverse backgrounds the authors were able to identify ‘voice’ as the anchoring point of the study. It is testimony to the collaborative approach of the authors, who found a way of working together that addressed the different interests of their client groups and the research questions they wished to pursue. The focus of the interviews was on women’s experiences of life and learning:

“We were particularly interested in how maternal practice might shape women’s thinking about human development and the teaching relationship. We expected that by listening to women talk about mothers and mothering, we might hear themes that were especially distinctive in a women’s voice” (Belenky *et al.*, 1986:13).

Drawing out the concept of ‘maternal thinking’ as described by Ruddick (1980, cited in Belenky *et al.*, 1986), the authors anticipated that wisdom (knowledge) gained through maternal thinking and practice might illuminate educators and practitioners in social services in their work regarding human development.



The five epistemological perspectives by which women know and view the world, as identified by this study provide an organising framework for the book. These are (1) silence, (2) subjective knowing, (3) received knowing, (4) procedural knowing, including two different types of procedures, called separate and connected knowing, and (5) constructed knowing. The book is presented in two parts; the first focuses on ways of knowing, whilst the second explores the context of development in families and schools. The final chapter develops the idea of ‘connected teaching’, the theme of which is bringing the maternal voice into the academy. The substance of each perspective can be differentiated as follows:

*Silence:* in silence women experience themselves as mindless and voiceless, and subject to the whims of authority.

*Subjective knowing:* from this perspective, truth and knowledge are conceived as personal and private and subjectively known and or intuited.

*Received knowing:* this is where women see themselves as capable of receiving and reproducing knowledge from external authorities. But these women do not see themselves as being able to construct or create knowledge themselves.

*Procedural knowing:* procedural knowledge is present where women are invested in learning. It describes methods for obtaining and communicating knowledge. Two types of procedural knowledge are reported; ‘separate knowing’ distinguished by evaluation and objectivity in judging an others point of view, and ‘connected knowing’, distinguished by acceptance and appreciation of another’s’ point of view. These procedures build on ‘different voice’ theory (Gilligan, 1982), highlighting how separation and attachment influence ways in which men and women tend to think through and approach issues.

*Constructed knowing*: from this position, women view all knowledge as contextual. They experience themselves as creators of knowledge and place value on both subjective and objective strategies for knowing.

### **Voice: a Metaphor for Growth and Development**

The authors noticed how the metaphor of finding or gaining voice appeared to reverberate throughout the interviews. Initially, they thought it was merely a form of shorthand for a point of view, but as they progressed with the interviews they began to appreciate it as a metaphor that applied to many aspects of women's experience and their development. Women spoke of voice and silence as they described their lives, using variously such terms as speaking up, speaking out, being silenced, really talking, really listening, feeling deaf and dumb, having no words, saying what you mean and listening to be heard. This range of comments fell within the five perspectives and was related to feelings and beliefs regarding sense of mind, self worth and the extent to which women felt isolated from or connected to others. The metaphor of voice became the unifying theme that linked both the perspectives and the chapters in the book. Furthermore, the idea of finding voice is symbolic of the journey that women have had to make to 'put the knower back into the known' and to reclaim the power of their minds and voices (Belenky *et al.*, 1986:19).

The authors draw our attention to the differences between the visual and oral traditions in respect of knowledge and knowing. The following quotation shows the subtlety and influence of using this analogy when compared with the oral tradition in the shaping of the western mind:

"Visual metaphors such as, 'the mind's eye' suggest a camera passively recording a static reality and promote the illusion that disengagement and objectification are central to the construction of knowledge" (Belenky *et al.*, 1986:18).

The authors further point out that visual metaphors suggest that you need to stand or position yourself at a distance if you are to get a proper view. Contrast this with the oral tradition where “the ear requires closeness of subject and object” (ibid.) if one is to be heard and appreciated by the other. Put this way, the metaphor of voice and its importance in *WWK* takes on a very particular and enhanced significance, as will become clear when we examine the differences between ‘separate’ and ‘connected’ knowing.

In academia, when we speak in terms of the visual metaphor, we tend to invoke the qualities of illumination. For example, when we use theory to illuminate practice, the practice becomes a ‘thing’ for which the theory provides background objectification, and thus the mind’s eye is associated with intellect and reason. By contrast, more auditory or kinesthetic analogies, such as resonance, imply relationship and connectivity, within which subjectivity is an active component. Subjectivity was considered antithetical to the academic and scientific tradition until relatively recently. Though there has been some movement in this, academics tend to remain suspicious of subjectivity.

Taking the path less travelled, the authors choose to pay particular attention to the maternal voice and how it influences knowing.

“The stories of the women drew us back into a kind of knowing that had too often been silenced by the institutions in which we grew up and of which we were a part. In the end we found that, in our attempt to bring forward the ordinary voice, that voice had educated us” (Belenky *et al.*, 1986:20).

In hearing and naming the maternal voice, not generally associated in institutions of higher education, *WWK* serves to facilitate the questioning of the dominant repertoire of theories of knowledge in the academy, and offers possibilities for its expansion.

## **A More Detailed Understanding of the Five Perspectives**

**Silence:** For women whose voices were silenced, silence was synonymous with oppression. Belenky *et al.* (1986), utilising a question from Gilligan's (1982) study, asked the women to describe their sense of self as they see themselves now and in the past. For women who are 'silent' this was an impossible task, as they claimed that they "relied on what others told them about themselves to get any sense of self" (1986:31). In their interviews, they described their experience as being silenced by voices of authority, and they reported that these authorities were quick to tell them (with respect to their thinking) 'you've got it wrong'. In examples such as this, words were used as weapons, undermining or belittling them. For some women, silence provided a degree of safety, as they were fearful of speaking in the face of authority. Some described their experience as being akin to feeling "deaf and dumb" (Belenky *et al.*, 1986:34). Authorities were described as "wordless authorities" (1986:27). By which, the women explained that those in authority seldom made it clear what they wanted or expected, moreover, such authority figures "expected you to know in advance" (1986:28). These women were effectively terrorised in their silence, defending themselves both psychologically and, in some cases, physically, by being on guard and anticipating the whims of authority. This type of silence is marked by violence. Silent women, the authors reported, often grew up in social isolation from others, with their families cut off from the wider community. In addition, discussion with other family members was often actively discouraged. "The silent women lived cut off from others in a world full of rumor and innuendo" (1986:25).

Conditions of social isolation, coupled with a lack of opportunity to play with other children, or the chance to engage in dialogic relations with others, served to arrest the development of silent women. Through dialogue 'inner' and 'outer' speech is developed. Whilst the former facilitates an awareness of one's thought

process, in other words, an awareness of the development of mind, the latter facilitates a development of voice. Whilst these are 'home' factors, the school context was not necessarily any more supportive for silent women. Belenky *et al.* (1986) point out that schools provide little for the development of outer speech and inner speech, where the traditional role of the teacher is that of the knowledge authority. Thus, the teaching methods serve to reinforce the experience of silence. Furthermore, Belenky *et al.* argue that to concentrate on developing the written form before the oral process has been developed is likely to be tragic. They describe these silent women as "...lost in the sea of words and numbers that flooded their schools" (1986:34). For them, school was an unlikely place to find voice, "...it only confirmed their fears of feeling 'deaf and dumb'" (ibid.). And, in the words of one women, "in school you get detention for talking to others" (ibid.). The term and perspective of silence became a benchmark for the study.

"This position though rare, at least in our sample, is an important anchoring point for our epistemological scheme, representing an extreme in denial of self and in dependence on external authority for direction" (Belenky *et al.*, 1986:24).

### *From my perspective*

The descriptions of silence, as described in *WWK*, strongly resonated with my childhood recollections and observations of my mother. I was born in Coventry in the 1950s. My parents had emigrated from Scotland so that my father could work in one of the car factories. My mother, the youngest of ten, struggled to cope. Socially isolated, she had no-one to turn to, to help her in developing her skills in cooking and parenting. Money was tight, we lived in relative poverty, and due to the onset of illness in pregnancy my mother had lost her job. She had epilepsy, and without a reference she was unable to find another job, not that she could have coped with a job and a child at that time. To keep a roof over our heads my father worked long hours, but he was unable to cope with the domestic

chaos that prevailed and, in turn, he took his frustration out on my mother, subjecting her to regular beatings. Thus, domestic violence, social isolation, the lack of opportunity to play, and the absence of dialogue with others bounded my childhood experience within a wall of silence.

Like the silenced women that Belenky *et al.* describe, I had learned that survival depended on obeying wordless authorities. I grew up knowing that I should not wait to be told to do something; rather, I should anticipate what they wanted. Being seen and not heard was required.

**Subjective Knowing:** The hallmark of subjective knowing is the emergence of ‘the inner voice’. This perspective marks a developmental shift from passivity to action, in effect, from silence to a “protesting inner voice and infallible gut” (Belenky *et al.*, 1986:54), which facilitates a sense of self, agency and control.

Significantly, ‘truth’ now resides in the person, this transition enabling women to become their own authorities. This is the key difference, when compared with the perspective of received knowing. However, both perspectives still share the tendency toward dualism, that being the belief in right and wrong answers. Belenky *et al.* suggest that a shift toward this perspective is linked to the experience and reaction women have to “failed male authority” (Belenky *et al.*, 1986:57).

“For women, the freedom from social convention and definitions implied in the shift into subjectivism represents a more greater autonomy and independence” (Belenky *et al.*, 1986:55).

Subjectivism is in essence the antithesis of rationalism and scientific thought; therefore, this perspective is not without risk to the knower in a world dominated

by the scientific and rational tradition. Belenky *et al.* inform us that some women are 'shaky' about the power of their own judgment.

The developmental process in this period of subjective knowing lays the ground for experiential learning through reflection, as the women learn to 'hear themselves think' and take heed of their observations and listening.

### *From my perspective*

Though I remained confident as I entered my teenage years that the right answers were to be found through those in authority, particularly in education, I began to experience doubt both in respect to parental authority, and that of church, whose doctrine of blind faith defied both logic and plausibility. Being brought up a Roman Catholic, attending a girls' catholic school and taught mainly by nuns,<sup>52</sup> I gradually became more cynical about the wisdom of many of my teachers. I could not see how such apparently intelligent people could be fooled by the double standards portrayed by the clergy (who governed the school).

In the mid-sixties, the role of women in society was changing, yet at the same time the clergy, by Papal decree, was charged to preach from the pulpit on women, their place in society and the doctrine of the church, which banned the use of the pill. Though at the time I was too young for these matters to affect me directly, they did affect the decisions of women of my mother's generation, many of whom, like my mother, neither wanted nor could cope with another pregnancy. There were rumours about one of the parish priests having an affair with a local woman. Many years later, another was to be charged and found guilty of child sex abuse. The parish priest had no interest in the poor or needy in the parish; he was only interested in building up the wealth of the parish, and

---

<sup>52</sup> There were a number of lay teachers, though they were required to be practicing Catholics.

to this end he only had time for 'his' wealthy sponsors. I found this deplorable, since the majority of parishioners were working-class, and selflessly gave significant sums of money to the church every week. Though unable to speak up or speak out against these failed authority figures, my inner voice was beginning to inform my thinking.

For me, the turning point in my quest for self came following a long period of illness in my fourteenth and fifteen years, when my educational future was placed in doubt, and when the options being presented to me were typing skills, a quiet little job in an office, and a good marriage prospect. I could no longer see my life in terms of the values of the community in which I lived, or indeed, imagine fulfilling their expectations of me. I began to plan my escape and, with the help of my doctor, I determined to make education my ally.<sup>53</sup>

***Received Knowers:*** This perspective involves listening to the voices of others as a means of knowing what to know. Thus, within this perspective listening, receiving or taking in what authorities have to say is equated with being a learner.

"While received knowers can be very open to take in what others have to offer, they have little confidence in their ability to speak. Believing that truth comes from others, they still their own voices to hear the voices of others" (Belenky *et al.*, 1986:37).

From this perspective, the notion that 'truth' is received and is somehow 'out there' and experienced as external, is the predominant view of women who have this perspective. The idea that 'truth' is constructed is out with the perspective of these women. One of the features of this perspective is that it is difficult to believe that authorities themselves might disagree or hold competing views. I

---

<sup>53</sup> I continue this story in Part Two of this thesis.



recall vividly a particular occasion with the first MAPOD cohort, when one of the students, frustrated by the different views expressed by the tutor team, shouted: “Why can’t you lot get your act together”, reflecting her expectation that authorities should be clear about ‘the truth’.

Received knowers are listeners and tend toward conformist thinking. Belenky *et al.* suggest that the socialisation of women in society to ‘be seen and not heard’ conditions them to “cultivate their capacities for listening while encouraging men to speak” (1986:45). It is further argued that when women speak they are judged not in comparison to men but by this taken for granted ‘standard’ of behaviour. This view is supported by Cline and Spender (1987).<sup>54</sup>

Though there have been changes to society’s norms in the west, facilitating opportunities for more equal relationships between men and women, particularly with regard to educational opportunity, change on the home front by comparison, for many working mothers, has been in my experience been minimal, whilst in the boardroom very little has changed. Received knowers are potentially very vulnerable. According to Belenky *et al.*:

“Received knowers are especially at the mercy of authorities judgments. If someone in a powerful position tells such a woman that she is wrong or bad or crazy, she believes it” (Belenky *et al.*, 1986:49).

On the other hand, if the authority demonstrates belief in the woman, it is likely to cause the woman to believe in herself.

---

<sup>54</sup> In their aptly named book, *Reflecting Men at Twice their Natural Size*.

### *From my perspective*

As a child I experienced myself as dumb and without a voice though I did not experience myself as deaf. Rather, I depended on authorities for guidance and believed that if I listened well to those in authority I would learn. But like the women in Belenky *et al.*'s study, I was vulnerable to the judgments of authorities, and their view of me shaped my own view of myself. I went to my first primary school until I was approximately eight years old, where most of the teachers I encountered gave me some encouragement to positively see myself as a learner and a potentially useful citizen. But in my next school the message changed. The school was pioneering discovery methods of learning, where the children were being sent out to complete tasks and projects and learn for themselves, but with little or no guidance. I was used to being instructed and found myself at sea in this new regime. The school authorities demanded due deference from pupils, which translated as 'carry out instructions as given by authority figures and don't ask questions'. Consequently, I found myself in a double bind. I did not thrive in this environment. I was not considered suitable grammar school material and I duly failed the eleven plus examination, leaving to attend a local secondary modern school. Despite this experience of perceived failure as a learner, I persevered, believing that I just had to listen harder and pay more attention if I was to become a successful learner.

***Procedural knowing:*** Procedural knowledge is generally thought of as 'the voice of reason'. Belenky *et al.* tell us how the voice of reason stifles the inner voice. One example given is the procedures taught for analysing a painting. They describe five criteria on which one's evaluation and judgment of a painting is made, namely:

- the composition;
- the texture;

- the colour;
- the lighting;
- how the artist expresses his/her feelings.

The self is noticeably absent from this procedure.

“The inner voice turns critical; it tells them their ideas may be stupid, and because their ideas must measure up to certain objective standards they speak in measured tones. Often they do not speak at all. But this is not a passive silence; on the other side of this silence, reason is stirring” (Belenky *et al.*, 1986:95).

In academia, there are conventions supporting this type of reasoning. In particular, argument and adversarial discourse. Gilligan (1982) and Lyons (1983, in Belenky *et al.*, 1986:102) described two different self-concepts. One a ‘separate self’, that is autonomous, which gives its name to ‘separate knowing’, and the other, in which one is ‘connected’ to others in relationship, and thus named ‘connected knowing’.

*Separate Knowing*: Doubting is at the heart of separate knowing. Citing Elbow, who coined the phrase ‘the doubting game’, we are told that this involves “putting something on trial to see if it is wanting or not” (1973, in Belenky *et al.*, 1986:104). In short, this procedure requires us to look for what is wrong and/or missing, taking the contrary position, or playing devils advocate. It is a procedure commonly applied in academia toward teaching learning and assessment.

*From my perspective*

This was the game I would learn as an undergraduate and further refine as postgraduate and new academic. Paradoxically, in finding voice in the academy, the doubting game can leave students feeling that they rather than their ideas are

being put on trial. Belenky *et al.* suggest that students may become pawns in the doubting game.

“In accepting authorities’ standards, separate knowers make themselves vulnerable to their criticism. The authorities have a right to find fault with the reasoning of separate knowers; and since there is nothing personal in their criticism, the separate knowers must accept it with equanimity” (Belenky *et al.*, 1986:107).

That this is the dominant way of knowing in academia is not insignificant. As a tutor, I have felt obliged to teach my students how to play the doubting game. I wanted them to know how to construct a good enough argument and to know that they should back up their claims with evidence. Not least, because I know that they would likely be judged by that standard by other authorities. Separate knowing is a public language expressed in public performance and based on reason and critical thinking, in contrast to subjective knowing which is a private language based on intuition. But I have learned that, for some students, even teaching them how to play this game can hinder their development, as they experience and/or perceive this procedure to be destructive. For students who have yet to find their voice, and who are vulnerable to criticism, the location of criticism as personal and not in the context of their ideas is often how they hear feedback, which can undermine their development and, in some cases, lead to feelings of failure. This experience as a tutor is borne out by the findings of Belenky *et al.* who report that “on the whole, women found the experience of being doubted debilitating rather than energizing” (1986:227).

In developing their argument, the authors describe it as “the doubting model as peculiarly inappropriate for women” and further state that they are “not convinced” that it is any more “appropriate for men” (Belenky *et al.*, 1986:228). At times this traditional approach to academic judgment on MAPOD became a source of tension between staff and students, raising questions concerning what

constitutes academic rigour and 'valid knowing'. It has been a significant question for my own practice, and one that has influenced my research.

The language of separate knowing is a public one based on reason. Belenky *et al.* remind us that we are governed not by men but by laws. This type of procedural knowledge extracts the self from the known. It relies on objectivity and pure reason. It is an adversarial form and has significant power implications. On this very issue, Belenky *et al.* state:

"This is not the common ground of genuine colleagues. The teacher has not, in the words of radical educator Paulo Freire, become a genuine 'partner of the students', a 'student among students' (1971,p.62). The teachers still weald the power: They write the rules of the game and rate the players' performances. But teachers and students can now speak a common language, and they can at least play at being colleagues" (1986:107).

Despite shifts in power relations on MAPOD toward greater equity between students and tutors through practices such as peer assessment, partnership as described by Belenky *et al.* remained problematic. It is one of the living contradictions experienced in my practice as a tutor and is a paradox that sat uncomfortably at times with the broader efforts of tutors and the programme to facilitate a different way of being in educative relations with students, that being a more collegiate relationship, and one responsive to students' needs.

Separate knowing is engrained as the dominant mode of discourse in business and society. It is characterised by debate and the notion of the better argument. Schweickart (1996) suggests that we are not easily able to conceive of a way that is different and yet, still valid.

**Connected knowing:** Connected knowers develop procedures for gaining access to other people's experiential knowledge through resonance and empathy. It involves acceptances and precludes evaluative judgment. It is the opposite of the

‘doubting game’; it is ‘the believing game’ (Elbow, 1973, in Belenky *et al.*, 1986:113). It involves “seeing the other not in their own terms but in the other’s terms”.<sup>55</sup> Schweickart cites the definition offered by Clinchy (1989) of the ‘believing game’, stating:

“[it is where you] suspend your disbelief, put your own views aside, and try to see the logic in the idea. Ultimately, you need not agree with it, but while you are entertaining it, as Elbow says, ‘say yes to it’: you must empathise with it, feel with it and think with the person who created it” (Clinchy, 1989, cited in Schweickart, 1996:310).

Connected knowing is marked by “really listening”. It involves the “capacity to attend to another person and to feel related to that person in spite of what may be enormous differences” (Belenky *et al.*, 1986:143).

### ***Contrasting the Two Procedures***

In separate knowing, evaluation serves to place the object at a distance and the self above it, creating mastery over it, whereas connected knowing requires intimacy and equity with the person and their ideas. Knowledge as judgment and knowledge as understanding would seem to differentiate these two procedures.

“Connected knowers begin with an interest in the facts of other people’s lives, but they gradually shift the focus to other people’s ways of thinking. As in all procedural knowing, it is the form rather than the content of knowing that is central. Separate knowers learn through explicit formal instruction how to adopt a different lens -how, for example, how to think like a sociologist. Connected knowers learn through empathy. Both learn to get out from behind their own eyes and use a different lens, in one case the lens of a discipline, in the other the lens of another person (Belenky *et al.*, 1986:115).

---

<sup>55</sup> The work of Elbow (1973), a composition theorist is cited by Belenky *et al* (1986:104). They state that he had run a programme at one of the participatory colleges in their study, on innovative writing for new students. Though his ideas of believing and doubting originate in the context of composition writing, Belenky *et al.* use them as an explanatory framework to explore the way in which a reader and specifically an academic authority might approach a text.

Though connected knowers avoid making judgments, this should not be taken as a sign of passivity or lack of agency. The attitude of trust and the assumption that the person has something good to say would, according to Belenky *et al.*, suggest forbearance, if not an intentional form of passivity, reflecting a relationship in tune with the other.

### ***Connected Teaching***

Linked to connected knowing is connected teaching. It is concerned with bringing the feminine principle into the educational learning relationship. “It is time for the voice of the mother to be heard in education” (Noddings, in Belenky *et al.*, 1986:214). This is a clear reference to the maternal voice, the caring voice of the mother. Belenky *et al.* invoke the metaphor of ‘teacher as midwife’. This is where the teacher helps the student draw out and give birth to their own ideas. Where the women in their study reported occasions for developmental/cognitive growth, it was where a midwife model of teaching and learning had been employed (Belenky *et al.*, 1986:227). The authors further describe connected teachers as “believers [who] trust their students’ thinking and encourage them to expand it” (Belenky *et al.*, 1986:227).

### ***From my perspective***

As a tutor, I have had to work much harder to develop this kind of knowing in my teaching and learning relationships, grappling with and learning how to really listen, and be accepting of student accounts. The challenge this has presented has given rise to an area of inquiry within my research, which I offer as storied account of working with students, in Part Two of this thesis.

**Constructed knowing:** This is a perspective that integrates ways of knowing, creating a voice in which women embrace the pieces of themselves, in search of their own unique voice.

“It is in the process of sorting out the pieces of the self and of searching for a unique and authentic voice that women come to the basic insights of constructivist thought: **All knowledge is constructed, and the knower is an intimate part of the known**” (Belenky *et al.*, 1986:137) emphasis original.

To be able to see knowledge as constructed expands our possibilities for thinking about things. Constructed knowers appreciate the relevance and uniqueness of context to knowledge. Constructed knowing greatly expands the power of the mind. Building on Polyanyi’s (1958) contribution to our understanding of the role of ‘personal knowledge’ in scientific thinking, Belenky *et al.* suggest that constructed knowing excites a passion for knowing: “the passionate participation of the knower in the act of the known” (1986:141).

#### *From my perspective*

This thesis involves such passion as described above, in that a self-study places my ‘I’ at the centre of my inquiry, as I engage reflexively with the construction of my own living theory, and its reconstruction, as I come to know myself as a living contradiction, and as I passionately engage with improving my practice in my teaching and learning relationships. Commenting on this quality of knowing. Belenky *et al.* state:

“What we are calling passionate knowing is the elaborated form connected knowing takes after women learn to use the self as an instrument of understanding” (Belenky *et al.*, 1986:141).

The capacity to ‘really listen’ goes hand in hand with the capacity to ‘really talk’. It involves constructed discourse, such as exploration, talking and listening, asking questions, argumentation, hypothesising and the sharing of ideas. It is a



reciprocal process where listening and taking on board the ideas of another no longer has the oppressive elements, as experienced by the received knower. “In ‘real talk’ domination is absent, reciprocity and cooperation are prominent” (Belenky *et al.*, 1986:145-146).

‘Really talking’ is likened to the ‘ideal speech’ situation of Jurgen Habermas and is based on each person being able to speak their truth unencumbered by power plays from the other. Habermas emphasises both understanding and achieving consensus concerning validity of claims, assessed by truth, truthfulness and normative rightness. Habermas relies on the process of intersubjective understanding as the litmus test for assessing validity claims, or a warrant to the argument. Intersubjectivity is taken as primordial by Habermas for the co-ordination of action.

### **Criticisms of *Women’s Ways of Knowing***

#### *Perspectives or stage theory?*

WWK has not been without its critics. Despite the authors’ assertions that the five epistemological perspectives identified in the study are not presented as a developmental stage theory, they have faced criticism on this front.

“Despite the explicit disclaimers, the rhetoric of the book, reinforced by its organisation and the invocation of other developmental psychologists, continually evokes notions of progress from simpler to more complex, less to more adequate ways of knowing or epistemological perspectives” (Ruddick, 1996:252).

This seems fair criticism, since the journey from silence to voice as described by the five perspectives does give the illusion of progress, and as Ruddick points out this journey mirrors the educational process of development utilised in the

United States. Indeed, the progress marked by constructed knowing in education is rewarded and seen as a mark of epistemological and intellectual success.

### **Valuing Diversity or Concealing its Complexity?**

*WWK* made a distinctive contribution to its field, because it drew on the experience of women both at universities (the traditional location for participants in social science studies) and ‘invisible colleges’ of America, thus including women who had not had a formal education, and who were from poorer working class backgrounds and usually excluded from such studies. We are told that the study included a number of women from diverse ethnic minority backgrounds. However, criticism has been made in respect of its limited application to non-white American and Anglo Saxon cultures. Who are these women from ethnic minority backgrounds? The merging of the data into a melting pot of women’s responses conceals rather than reveals the uniqueness of their experience. Consequently, we do not get an appreciation of the richness or complexity of the diversity that women from ethnic minority communities bring to the study. Referring to the way in which the authors of *WWK* describe how they worked with the interview data, Maher and Tetreault make the point that “few of these individual ‘whole stories’ are heard” (1996:155). Indeed, they argue that what is missing is a perspective of the societal and structural influences of race and class, culture and other factors that serve to shape and influence the growth and development of self. This concealment of positionality, that is, the location of identity within a network of relationships, including cultural, political and economic, obscures the very differences that a study of inclusionality ought to achieve.

## Silence: a Negative or Positive Experience?

Not unconnected to the view on diversity and positionality is the criticism of *WWK* for its rendering of silence as an inadequacy. Though there is no doubt that the women cited were silenced due to powerful voices in authority that left them feeling deaf and dumb, criticism suggests that silence may be a virtue in some cultural contexts and not a lack as implied by this study.

One such alternative has come from Patricinio Schweickart (1996). A Filipino, Schweickart begins her essay with reflections on the meaning and tradition of silence in her own culture, in which silence is valued. In particular, Schweickart presents a positive relationship between silence as a way of knowing and wisdom, and asserts that “thoughtful silence is a highly valued form of agency” (1996:306).

Though the criticism that Schweickart offers recognises the potential for difference, it does not in my opinion diminish the particular perspective on silence that the authors of *WWK* found. Adding further clarity to this perspective, in the light of such differences, Belenky (1996) adds a ‘d’ to the word silence. Not wishing to disrupt but clarify this perspective as an anchor for their epistemological framework, Belenky argues that what specifically distinguished these women whose stories informed this perspective was that they were silenced (Belenky, 1996:427). In her notes on page 427, Belenky points out that in studies of non Western cultures as those reported by Goldberger,<sup>56</sup> silence is linked to powerful accounts of “connecting with and apprehending the world” independent of language and ways of being that for those of us who are what she calls ‘word people’, dependent on language, find difficult to understand. Defending the original perspectives of silence and received knowing, Belenky

---

<sup>56</sup> And of course by Schweickart in the same book, *Knowledge, Difference and Power*, Goldberger *et al.* (1996).

(1996) argues that retention of these epistemological perspectives in their original form is important to projects concerned with emancipation, in other words, where the aim is to overcome the stifling of the human condition caused by silence, and where the goal is to facilitate human liberation and the facilitation of voice.

The journey from silence to voice involves awareness of how one's voice has been stifled, and a critique of the oppressor, thus enabling one to distinguish and construct a voice of one's own, and a sense of self and mind. A similar position is taken by Freire, who says:

“In order for the oppressed to be able to wage the struggle for their liberation, they must perceive the reality of their oppression, not as a closed world from which there is no exit, but as a limiting situation which they can transform. This perception is necessary, but not a sufficient condition by itself for liberation; it must become the motivating force for liberating action... The oppressed can overcome the contradiction in which they are caught only when this perception enlists them in the struggle to free themselves” (1972:25).

Personally, I find Belenky's (1996) clarification to add a 'd' to silence, immensely helpful. I have both experienced the perspective of silence as a child growing up in a chaotic world that mirrors the descriptions offered by Belenky *et al.* (1986), and as described earlier, and I have experienced being silenced as a mature professional woman in the face of overwhelming voices of authority. This is despite otherwise being considered by colleagues to have a strong sense of personal agency. I thus want to suggest that the experience of silence is not only an anchor point, as described by the authors of *WWK* for their findings, but in addition, I perceive silence like a virus, ever contagious in an authoritarian and androcentric social order. Not wishing to understate my view on this issue, I cite Richard Shaull:<sup>57</sup>

---

<sup>57</sup> Who wrote the foreword for Freire's (1972) *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*.

“At first sight Paulo Freire’s method of teaching illiterates in Latin America seems to belong to a different world from that in which we find ourselves. Certainly it would be absurd to claim that it be copied here. But there are certain parallels in the two situations which should not be overlooked. Our advanced technological society is rapidly making objects of most of us and subtly programming us into conformity to the logic of its system. To the degree that this happens, we are also being submerged in a new ‘culture of silence’” (Shaul, in Freire, 1972:foreword).

I think Shaul makes the case that silence remains a real and present danger for all of us in the modern world.

### **‘Ideal Speech’ and ‘Really Talking’: a Different Perspective**

Whilst appreciating Habermas’ effort to put intersubjectivity in the forefront of cognitive and moral theories, Schweickart critiques what she calls her ‘counterintuitive’ response to his reduction of ‘understanding’ to ‘agreement’, (1996).

“In my view Habermas offers a stripped down version of communication, one that has been emptied of substance in order to render it theoretically manageable. One theoretical consequence of the exclusion of ‘feminised’ substance is a theory that misrepresents the structure of intersubjectivity and communication. Women’s Ways of Knowing recuperates the substance that has been dumped out (or ‘muted’) by Habermas” (Schweickart, 1996:309).

Schweickart’s argument is an important one for feminist standpoint theorists, because it highlights how the force of the better argument and the debate takes prime position in normative discourse. Feminist standpoint theory suggests that connected knowing need not be seen as subservient, rather it needs to be seen as different and valuable in its own right. Feminist standpoint theory aims to convince us that we can adopt an appreciative stance.

## Standpoint Theory: an Advantage or Disadvantage?

From the point of view of the authors of *WWK*, the intention to specifically draw on the experience of women stood in contrast to the male voices heard in the Perry (1970) study and the predominantly masculine perspective of social science studies in general. However, one anticipated criticism of a feminist standpoint approach to theory is that in the same way as those studies it criticises for excluding the feminine perspective, in turn it employs the exclusion of the male perspective.

It has been suggested to me by male students that the very title of *Women's Ways of Knowing* creates an assumption that any perspective relevant to them will be absent from the text. Whilst I believe that the specific intention to represent the experience of women, traditionally excluded from such studies was right and is a cause for celebration, I do empathise with the view expressed by those male students. More significantly, the danger with feminist standpoint theories, if they are seen to be exclusive, perpetuates the gender specific rather than gender related myth that the authors tried to explicitly avoid. Ruddick (1996) in defence of *WWK*, points out that the authors speak of particular women, not woman in general. Furthermore, she asserts that identities are not fixed.

Significantly, the perspective of connected knowing revealed in the study is relevant to both men and women if we are to cultivate a different way of being in relationship with others, specifically in education and industry. Ruddick points out that both "Women and Men are limited by a **system** that makes it difficult to think in a 'voice' that is both 'different' and credible" (1996:266, emphasis original). Indeed, in drawing out her argument for maternal leadership, Belenky cites Ruddick, who says:

"it is a struggle for women to make their own viewpoint heard, even to each other and to themselves. She says maternal

thinking is a 'revolutionary discourse' that has been silenced. 'As a central discourse', she says, '(it could) transform dominant, so-called normal ways of thinking' (Ruddick, 1989:p.269)" (Belenky, 1996:416).

Why then has society never recognised maternal thinking as an asset? Belenky (1996) suggests that mothers are ignored precisely because they are seen as irrelevant to public life. She develops her argument to suggest that because the role of motherhood is seen as natural, in other words, in essence, a gift of nature, the mother is seen to be exerting no 'agency' and thus her caring work is counted as contributing nothing. 'Agency' implies activeness and self-directedness. Thus, Belenky is suggesting that in the perceived absence of 'agency' we might understand how it is that the role of motherhood is assumed to be natural. That this myth needs to be tackled and shattered is important, if the discipline of maternal thinking is to be appreciated as a discipline and quality that is gender related and not gender specific, in other words, confined to women, and if it is to serve the thinking, understanding and behavioural changes that this different way of knowing can facilitate leadership roles.

Belenky provides an explanation of why this myth has become embedded in society. She points to economic accounting systems used world wide for assessing a nations wealth. "Whereas Women's traditional work is classified as 'reproductive' waging war is classified as 'productive'" (1996:416). Belenky explains that accounting systems were invented to help nations work out how they would pay for their wars, arguing that even today in many countries military expenditure can be allocated in accounting terms as though it were contributing to the wealth of a nation "in spite of the fact that military spending allocates resources to unproductive and destructive endeavors" (1996:416).

## Conclusions

Despite the criticisms, *WWK* has provided an expanded theory of knowledge, which has identified ways of knowing that are associated with the feminine principal, hitherto not recognised in earlier epistemic or developmental studies. It has contributed to our understanding of knowledge as a socially constructed phenomenon and one in which the maternal voice plays a significant part. This is important in a society that values reason and which has largely failed to recognise and place value on what we can learn from a different procedure, yet equally disciplined way of thinking. Its epistemological framework with its distinct anchor point of silence draws our attention the relationships and conditions that cause oppression, and helps us understand the development processes involved in moving from silence to voice. Notwithstanding criticism, it would seem that *WWK* has touched the lives and minds of many women and I am one of the many. It is a force for a liberating pedagogy.

At the beginning of this chapter I suggested that *WWK* shaped my emergent living theory in respect of influencing the MAPOD design as a community of learners. Like the ‘public homeplaces’ that Belenky (1996) describes,<sup>58</sup> MAPOD was founded with the idea that a community of learners would provide a safe haven in which learners, battered by the experience of inhumane workplace organisations, might find a space where they could recuperate in the company of peers and, in the process, develop a critical stance toward the social and political organisational arrangements that give rise to inhumane practice. At the time of launching MAPOD, in the mid-1990s, many of my students were Human Resource professionals, who were managing in difficult and changing circumstances, dealing with the onslaught of mergers, acquisitions and

---

<sup>58</sup> “Public homeplaces: nurturing the development of people, families and communities” by Mary Field Belenky, was one of the essays inspired by *WWK*, ten years after the initial study. See Belenky (1996).



redundancy programmes. These professionals were often absorbed with the work of 'emotional labour' (Fineman, 1993), which drained many of them of energy and assaulted their integrity. The values of care and respect amongst equals and relationships based on mutuality and reciprocity, as reported by Belenky (1996:395), were similarly espoused in the MAPOD recruitment process and reinforced on the programme, in the expectation that participants were responsible not only for their own learning but that of others. Learning how to facilitate a good company of learners became an important strand of my practice inquiry, not least as I would have to learn how to live up to the values and process that I espoused. Given my conditioning in the academy to be an effective procedural knower, I had much to discover in my inquiry about my way of thinking and coming to terms with myself as a living contradiction. The ideas in this book helped me do that.

Just as the authors of *WWK* returned to the work of Gilligan (1982) to develop their different voice theory, I too revisited her work so that I might better understand the storied accounts she gave to illustrate the differences in the rights and responsibilities orientation of participants in her studies on moral decision making. Moreover, it helped me to better understand how separation and attachment in the lives of men and women give rise to how 'truth' is carried by different modes of language and thought. Gilligan suggests that:

"To understand how the tension between responsibilities and rights sustains the dialectic of human development is to see the integrity of two disparate modes of experience that are in the end connected. While an ethic of justice proceeds from the premise of equality - that everyone should be treated the same - an ethic of care rests on the premise of non-violence - that no one should be hurt. In the representation of maturity, both perspectives converge in the realisation that just as inequality adversely affects both parties in an unequal relationship, so too violence is destructive for everyone involved" (1982:174).

In my own case, developing my understanding of these different truths has helped me grapple with and work through tensions between responsibilities and rights in my teaching and learning relationships, and in the course of this inquiry.

In this chapter, I have provided a review and critique of *WWK*. I have indicated how the ideas borne from this study resonated with my experience and how those ideas have influenced my thinking, professional practice and inquiry.

## ***PART TWO: THE STORIES***

## **CHAPTER FOUR: MAPPING THE PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL SELF - CHOICES AND SELF DETERMINATION**

### **Introduction**

In this chapter I present and reflect on two life stories, or rather events in my life, which are in part about choices and self-determination. Through these stories, I make connections between the past and present, in respect of my sense of self and, in particular, the implications for change in self-identity that are embedded in these stories, and which shape the process of self, voice and mind; in-turn shaping and influencing the relationship between my personal and professional development, as a way of being in the world.

Pye (1994) uses a life course framework of past, present and future against which we can begin to ask “What does it mean for me to learn from experience?”. It is a dynamic framework where past and present come together to reframe learning for the future, thus facilitating a transformative process.

The ‘stories told’ draw out the impact of ‘stories we live by’, in particular the profound influence they can have on one’s life direction. They are a part of my inquiry process, enabling me to gain fresh insight into my own development, marking a stage in my development between silence and voice.

It has often been said to me that I have determination and courage that enable me to persevere in the face of adversity. Jack, my Ph.D. supervisor, is one such commentator. For example, I have been determined to complete my Ph.D. in spite of serious illness and with limited support from my organisation. I would suggest that it is within my nature to be determined, implying that adversity is no

stranger to me. Through reflective conversations with Jack, I have tentatively explored where this so-called courage might come from. In making sense of these assertions, I return to stories of my childhood and formative years when I can say, with absolute certainty, that I had to make choices and have resolve. Let me share with you two stories that I have returned to as I inquire within myself where my sense of determination comes from.

But before I do, let me share with you the process of their emergence in the context of this inquiry. The second story was told to Jack at a supervision meeting in February or March 2003, when we were discussing choices, determination and overcoming adversity. It was Jack who suggested I might write it down and see what emerged. As I reflected on the possible relevance of this event to my life and current practice on the train journey home, I remembered another story that seemed to have a connection, yet at the time what the connection might be alluded me. I know that I just felt compelled to write it down too. I also felt compelled to write it down first, thus the connections that I draw out in the following account is the product of an emergent process.

To put these stories into context, they need to be told in the wider context of my life story, versions of which I have told in earlier accounts in this inquiry journey, for example in my M.Phil. transfer paper. However, to enrich and add background to these particular stories I will retell a version of my life story here.

## **Background**

When my parents married in 1956 they settled in Coventry, where my father had been working for a year or so in one of the car factories as an electrician's mate. They both originally hailed from Scotland. My mother had been in the same class at school as my father's brother and she met my father at a dance in the Co-operative hall when he was home from leave towards the end of his period of

national service. They courted as people did in those days for about eighteen months, and when my father decided to come to Coventry after the war to look for work, she remained in Scotland with her family until their wedding. Coventry had been bombed during the war, and with the rebuilding of the city and the decommissioning of the factories (commissioned during the war to build munitions) there were plenty of employment opportunities, and the chance for people to build new lives.

With my father's job, they were able to afford the deposit for a mortgage on a new house. They were becoming part of the emerging aspiring working class with their own home and a higher than average income, all the trappings of modern material wealth. When they were first married my mother worked as a bookkeeper in the bus garage but lost her job when she was pregnant with me, having had a minor epileptic fit (*petit mal*). Whether she had intended to return to work part-time after I was born is not clear, but I think my father had anticipated that would be the case. In the event, she did not and in later years I often heard her say she could not get a reference from the bus garage as a result of her illness. For the first ten years of their marriage the financial burden of provision fell to my father, a consequence of which was total financial dependency on him by my mother, a situation not that unusual for women of her generation.

### **Story 1.**

*The first story emerges from a memory of walking with my mother around the streets where we lived.* It was 1964 or thereabouts and my mother was pushing my baby brother along in a push-chair. I would have been seven years old at the time. I recall the wind and the drizzle of the rain, and holding on to the push-chair with one hand. As we walked, my mother became distressed and tearful. She said we were leaving home and that she wanted to go back 'home' to

Scotland. I do not recall what had happened to prompt this decision. It was not the first time we had left. I was becoming aware that she and my father had many violent arguments, and that my grandparents' home provided a place of safety and respite. But this time she seemed different, whether she simply did not have enough money for the train fare, or whether she believed that if she left this time there would be no going back, I do not know. What I do know is that she was in despair. As we walked, I sensed her desperation as she explained to me her perceived dilemma, "impossible to go and impossible to stay". But she had another solution, one that she could control, effectively disempowering my father.

As I have already mentioned, my mother had epilepsy for which she took a number of barbiturates. As she grappled with the impossibility of her situation, she reasoned that we could escape. She resolved to crush a tablet and give it to the baby in his milk, and she explained to me that she and I would swallow the others. Until that moment, I do not ever recall questioning her authority. Perhaps the innocence of childhood gave me hope, but whatever my motivation, I was choosing life, and I was determined that no matter what she did I would not take the pills. I remember feeling confident that she could not trick me into taking them, as I knew their smell. They were so pungent that I reasoned she would not be able to crush or dissolve them into anything which I would eat or drink. I do not remember what I said to her. I may have said nothing. Perhaps she sensed my resistance, for I have no recollection of trying to reason with her, just my strong instinct to choose life. If I did influence her at all, I know she was not fully swayed, as I recall her saying "if he hits me again, I'll take these". We walked until it became dark, returning home, uncertain of the mood we would find my father in, or indeed, if he would even be there.

At the time, I was unaware, as was my mother, that my father was having a nervous breakdown, which would account for his unpredictable moods and

rages. He only talked about this to us shortly before he died. His own account of childhood with an alcoholic father and a mother who relied on him to help look after his younger siblings whilst she cleaned steps and worked in service, goes some way to explain the impact of this legacy on my father's character and my childhood.

He felt compelled to be the breadwinner and provide for his family, and to this end he worked 'every hour God sent'. Overtime was available, and he was willing to work on the water tower that kept the electricity generator going for the factory, which involved climbing a steep tower in often precarious and windy conditions. He was regularly on call on a Monday night and during Saturdays and Sundays. I now understand that the strain was too much for him, and though apparently earning good money, financially they were stretched with only one income.

The year following this event we moved to another part of town, where we became more integrated into the local community through the school and church. My mother was able to meet other women who, like her, were not from England but who were intent on creating a life for themselves here. In time, she began to feel established and settled, getting part-time work and becoming involved in the running of the 'Union of Catholic Mothers'. My father continued to work 'every hour God sent', and they continued to argue and fight. He still controlled the purse strings but with her new-found independence, she became less of a victim. However, I was frequently caught in their arguments, trying to hold the peace or trying to avert a fight. My father was less volatile, but would simmer slowly, at times exploding when he could not contain his anger. I began to see how they constructed these arguments, but I was unable to stop them. Once they began to escalate they would stoke the argument and keep provoking each other until one of them had the 'last say'.



My brother still had not uttered a word and when he was three, recognising that this was not normal, my mother sought help. He was placed in a nursery to support his socialisation and he began a programme of speech therapy that continued throughout his school life. When he did speak it was with a severe stutter, and so he learned not to speak. He was in effect mute, in other words, silent most of the time. At the time, it was not obvious to me or possibly to anyone else how the family system contributed to his silence, as his stutter was always attributed to a difficult birth. Throughout his school life and to this day he continues to have a stutter, though not as severe as it once was. He now also has a history of mental illness.

During this period I attended the local Catholic primary school. I was extremely quiet and deferential to those in authority. The teachers were neither particularly interested in me nor encouraging in respect of my abilities, which contrasted with the encouragement and positive feedback I had been given in my previous school. At home, I took on increasing responsibilities for domestic duties and the care of my younger brother, as well as caring for my mother, who I would frequently find, on return from school, having or recovering from a blackout. I did not pass the eleven plus examination, and I probably was not expected to by the school. Months before the results were published my mother, who worked part-time in the school, claimed that she found a list on the headmaster's desk which had my name on it, along with the names of other girls allocated to the secondary modern school. Although I did not feel particularly intelligent, I believed that I was more able than others who were selected to attend the grammar school. My mother was convinced that in the parish there was a class demarcation drawn by the parish priest and the men who ran the parish affairs, and in this respect she perceived our family to be 'out' not 'in'.

Her defence of my integrity was to send me off to the secondary modern with a message that "it was better to be top of the secondary modern school, than

bottom of the grammar school". I accepted the logic of her argument and got on with my education. My recollection of the secondary school system was that there was opportunity and if you showed enthusiasm and aptitude you were encouraged to achieve.

## **Story 2**

The second story concerns a conversation I had with a medical consultant when I was fifteen and the consequent outcome of that conversation.

I had become ill in the October of my fourteenth year (the fourth year of secondary school) with influenza and jaundice. I then developed encephalitis, a virus that causes inflammation of the brain, and drifted into a coma. I was later told that I had a fever accompanied by symptoms not unlike rabies and when the fever eventually subsided, I drifted back into a coma for a period of time. It was a life and death situation and no-one, not least the doctors, expected me to survive. They predicted that if I did survive, it would be most probably with brain damage, deafness or some other disability. After months of hospitalisation I was allowed home.

My mother's strategy was to 'wrap me in cotton wool'. I was confined to bed. It was suggested that reading would be too stressful, and return to school was deemed out of the question. The doctors had suggested that I must be kept quiet. Commotion or excitement were to be avoided if a relapse was to be prevented. I was at home for a few weeks, after which it was arranged that I would spend a while in a convalescent home accompanied by my mother (which was intended to give her a break as much as give me supervised rest and recuperation time). Almost immediately, on my return, I was back in hospital, the virus was still active and I had relapsed. This was characterised by lethargy. I remained in hospital for another month, after which I returned home to the 'cotton wool'

treatment. This continued through the summer. I could not stand it, and begged my mother to buy me a book to read. She relented but suggested I read slowly, so as not to tire my brain. But I read it within a day or so, and I was hungry for more, so I pestered her to buy another one, and then another and another. I was still confined to bed with no prospect of being allowed to return to school in the foreseeable future.

The meeting with the doctor took place in the summer. Almost a year had passed since the onset of the virus. We were on our own, my mother was speaking to someone else and he seemed to be eager to talk to me about how I felt things were going. Although I was physically not that strong, I believed that the virus was now dormant. I was less lethargic and the tests were in my favour. Not being able to predict what the future held, the doctor suggested that a personality change might occur, but he was neither certain nor specific. I recollect telling him that I felt stifled by the 'cotton wool' treatment. I was taking a number of drugs, including Valium, and ironically my head felt like cotton wool. Life seemed to be in limbo. He intimated that I might consider a residential hospital. Basket-weaving was mentioned.

The hospitality of an institution was mildly appealing. It had crossed my mind that long-term hospitalisation might be an option presented to me. I was aware that some people thought I was mad or brain damaged, including some friends, their families and nuns at the school. Most ordinary people did not understand the concept of a virus in those days. It was understandable that they might believe that I would never be normal again. Some had heard stories of rabid behaviour (when my fever was raging) and there was also a fear that I might still be contagious, as I had been kept in isolation for months during the initial periods of illness with barrier nursing and limited visitors, who had to be masked and gowned. It was common knowledge that our home had to be fumigated because of this virus.

I had been told by the doctors that I was a medical rarity, since very few people got this virus and even fewer survived. During the initial period of hospitalisation, a consultant neurologist had been flown in from London to advise the medical team. I can only presume that he would have known about the survivors of the influenza pandemic of the 1920s who later developed *Encephalitis lethargica*, a colony of whom were resident in the Highlands Hospital in London. These patients were the only cases known about on which a prognosis could be made, and whilst the longer-term disease was alluded to, my consultant did not appear categorical about this. There was something in his tone that suggested to me that he did not really know. At that moment, I resolved to reclaim my life. In the following months I actively sought his co-operation in doing so, by way of a letter from him supporting a request to return to school, albeit part-time, attending a limited number of classes.

I returned to school on this basis sometime in the autumn term, initially for two mornings a week, and later on for half a day, every day until the end of the year. During this time I was chauffeured in and out. I did not attend assembly or do any physical education, and I was free to come and go to classes as I wished. I did not have to do homework, no-one expected anything from me, and there was a degree of consternation when I asked to be entered for public examinations. Somewhat reluctantly, the school entered me for five CSEs and an 'O' level in English. Unable to attend all the classes, I realised I needed notes to cover the syllabus, and these were provided by a circle of friends who each took it in turns to copy a notebook for me on the classes I missed.

I was not allowed out to socialise, but my friends were allowed to visit me, which they did regularly, often visiting as a group. On this basis we established our own study group, supporting each other through the preparation and revision period for the exams. And, much to the amazement of the school, this circle of

friends all achieved good results and we returned to school in the September to register for the sixth form (we were among a handful of non-grammar school girls who registered to study for 'A' levels). I was, by this stage, feeling well again (at least, most of the time). The school agreed to let me back full-time and, as far as I recall, I participated in most classes, including some physical education. This return to normality was, for me, a precursor for getting some freedom to reclaim my social life outside of school.

I was aware that almost everyone, including my father, had expected me to finish school after the CSEs. It was said to me on several occasions that by anyone's standards it was a considerable achievement to have gone back to school at all, let alone go back and achieve good grades. The message was to quit whilst I was ahead. My father thought I should learn to type, and he set about arranging a job for me at the factory he worked in, within one of the offices.

But I was adamant that under no circumstances would I learn to type or take the shorthand course. I could foresee my prospects if I went down that road; first a job in the factory offices, followed by marriage to a local apprentice. I dug my heels in and resolved to get two 'A' levels. I knew that if I could get admission to a college my parents would probably accept it as a legitimate basis for leaving home. I assumed all colleges had accommodation and that from my parents point of view there would be a responsible adult on hand to keep an eye on me should I become ill again.

One of the subjects I was studying was sociology. Family and kinship were hot topics at that time and I felt that I understood quite a bit about families. Social work seemed the obvious career choice, and with the help of the sociology teacher I applied to several polytechnics in the UK, of which six subsequently interviewed me and offered me a place on their social science degree course, specialising in social work or other professional options. To cover myself, I also

applied for a trainee social worker post in a London authority, which I held on to as an offer until my 'A' level results were confirmed. As I was not a grammar school girl, I was not seen as university material. As far as I know, I was the first pupil ever to go to a polytechnic from my school. My circle of friends, also non-grammar school girls, went on to a Catholic teacher training college that had a long history of links with the school and local dioceses. At that time, I did not see myself working as a teacher. The parochial nature of the job and the Catholic education system was for me off-putting. I had by then extracted myself from organised religion, despite the indoctrination of my upbringing and my parents' continued devotion to Catholicism and their belief that I was a walking miracle. In the event, I began a four year social science sandwich degree with the BPS Psychology track at Middlesex Polytechnic in 1975.

### **What Did I Learn From These Experiences?**

In both cases I learned something about the social construction of reality, although I would not have described it in that way at the time. From the first story, I learned something about 'learned helplessness' and dependency. Although the child of a silenced woman and socially isolated, I believe I had a sense of my inner voice from an early age.

Both cases taught me about the fallibility of authority figures, my mother, the doctors and those at school (teachers and nuns). Despite my deference to authority, I was able to think for myself. These experiences were instrumental in breaking the 'silence' for me. The first story helping me realise "my still small voice" (Belenky *et al.*, 1986) and the second, released "the roar behind the silence" (ibid.).

If I had a personality change resulting from encephalitis, as predicted by the medical authorities, it is in respect of self-preservation, fuelled by determination,

assertiveness and the discovery of my voice. Perhaps that is why I appear to be courageous or so determined in the face of adversity.

I would suggest that my experience has enabled me to empathise with others, and may explain why I am inclined to work with others who have experienced silence and oppression in their own lives and who have chosen education as a vehicle for liberation and the reconstruction of their self-identity. Perhaps the importance of educational opportunities to me in shaping my life course is why I value education so much now, and recognise why and how it can be the making of others.

More generally, perhaps these stories tell us something about the nature and process of a shift in the relationship between self and others. A shift that is self-organising in response to the trials and tribulations of life's experiences and that marks and punctuates in those moments a quest for self.

### **How Literature Informs My Understanding of These Stories**

Belenky *et al.* describe subjective knowledge as: "the quest for self... As a result, her relationships and self-concept began to change" (1986:76). Perhaps the first story was the initial attempt to resist silence, the first stirrings, where my inner voice spoke. The second story, characterising a movement and shift in my relationships with all authoritarian figures, marks a change that is more profound, where I develop the psychological determination to resist the hitherto all-powerful and overpowering voices of authority. It marks a turning point in my sense of self and in my state of mind, the outcome being a conscious and deliberate severance of connections, a choice to walk away from my past. Belenky *et al.* state:

"Although subject to an extraordinary range of emotional pushes and pulls - anxiety, anger, insecurity, guilt, depression,

exhilaration - most of the women were making these changes with a stubborn determination" (1986:76).

Furthermore, they cite "going away to school" as characteristic of "the push for freedom of younger, single women" (1986:77). Additionally, they acknowledge the extent to which the family context may reinforce actions such as risk taking or conformity.

"The eventual path a woman takes is, in large measure, a function of the familial and educational environments in which she is struggling with these problems. Families and schools differ tremendously in the degree to which they reinforce risk taking or conformity behavior in women" (1986:79).

I would, however, contest their assertion that subjectivist knowing characterises "a leap at the first chance to escape" (Belenky *et al.*, 1986:78). My determination and choices were neither simply opportunistic or self-indulgent, nor merely a consequence of the cultural narcissism of the 1970s. Neither would I describe my background as especially advantaged. We got by. Yes, we had more material wealth than some other working class families. Studying sociology, I identified our family as a product of the aspiring working class (Goldthorpe and Lockwood *et al.*, 1968). Going to college would not have been an option had the student grant not been available.

Life chances were an important factor that I weighed when I calculated support for my decision to pursue a higher education. In weighing the potential for risk and conformity that would be in my father's mind in respect of going to college, I was mindful of his love for education and the lack of opportunity his life chances had afforded him for continuing his education. Indeed, perhaps my determination owes something to my father's own history. I was aware of his struggle against poverty and that his decision to leave school at fourteen was because he felt a responsibility to work and support his mother and three younger siblings. Despite his pragmatism and leaning toward securing a future



for me based on the acquisition of practical skills, I knew that he would not stand in the way of my opportunity for an education that he would have loved himself, or one that afforded me the chance of social mobility. In my case, I had made my decision based on a calculated risk, in which the potential gains outweighed the potential losses.

I also want to challenge the notion that 'opposition' (defining one's self by what you are not) equals 'negative identity', a notion of Erickson's that Belenky *et al.* (1986:78) refer to. In my view, it is a natural process to identify with what you are not before you can identify what you are, because any construction is dependant on the relational-social context in which you live.

Belenky *et al.* assert that many subjectivist women turn against men, "turning all men out of their lives" (1986:80). This was not my experience, though I do understand and have some resonance with this assertion. I was far too attracted to men to contemplate turning them away. But I was in no doubt that I expected men to be on my side, to support my decision to work and pursue an independent career. As a consequence of this strongly held feeling, I rejected boyfriends and any relationship where there was any suggestion that we might get married and settle down, or where the men expressed a desire to have children, placing me in a domestic role or rendering me a 'kept woman'. Whilst I wanted a loving and secure relationship with someone, it had to be on my terms. Perhaps one of the reasons I chose to be with my husband, Richard, is that I have never felt threatened by him, or felt that he would make me or expect me to be dependent on him.

During this period of development characterised by subjective knowing, Belenky *et al.* (1986:82) suggest that women's sense of self is still defined by past relationships, and that many subjectivists grapple with the question "who am I?". In my own case, this is probably true. It was not until my son was born, when I

was thirty-two, that I stopped defining myself primarily as ‘their daughter’. During my undergraduate years, I was not too worried about ‘who’ I was, I simply drifted through college like many of my contemporaries, enjoying the freedom that undergraduate education then provided, whilst slowly growing apart from my family of origin. My sense of self, in terms of a distinct identity, was in part formed when I graduated and went to work, albeit shaped by the experience that higher education brings and a new found sense of professional identity, an identity; which has also developed over time, and been subject to change both professionally and personally, for example, with the experience of mothering and with age.

With the shift into subjectivism, Belenky *et al.* warn of the possibility of what they call “maladaptive consequences” of subjectivism:

“We wondered how trapped women might become in their subjectivist philosophy if they excluded others from their lives in an attempt at self-protection. We also wondered what or who might engage them in further questioning their assumptions about truth and knowing, propel them into further growth, and lead them to move beyond their trust of external influence” (1986:83).

They do acknowledge, however, that the majority of subjectivists were neither “entrenched, oppositional or despairing”, but rather, they were “curious from the moment they turned inward and listened to their still small voice” (Belenky *et al.* 1986:84).

Whilst I learned to trust my gut reaction (the inner voice of my subjective knowing) a long time ago, I have always retained a respect for external voices, particularly those with academic authority; not least because I discovered in the course of my experience the fact that professional opinion is often conditional on being able to support claims and assertions with some evidence. Rather than being trapped by the myth of subjectivism, I have at times been trapped by these

external voices, such is the power of those in academia that one has to be both sure of one's ground and know the rules before such authority can be effectively challenged. From a professional capacity, learning skills of procedural knowing both in the context of management and in academia, has enabled me to give voice to my own ideas, as well as appreciate those of external voices.

One of the paradoxes of subjectivism that Belenky *et al.* (ibid.) describe is the notion that for subjectivists "going it alone can contribute to their isolation from others". I do resonate with this, in my experience the certainty that comes with subjectivist knowing does not by itself eradicate social isolation, and as a woman in academia this paradox is even more significant in holding onto one's sense of integrity in the context of academia as a 'man's world'. Whilst subjective knowing is characterised by watching and listening, like the respondents in the Belenky *et al.* study (1986:85), I would concur that knowledge gained about myself was possibly more valuable than mutual exchange.

"Women's emphasis on beginning to hear themselves think, while gathering observations through watching and listening, is the precursor to reflective and critical thought" (ibid.).

Furthermore, Belenky *et al.* emphasise that it is during the subjectivist period that women lay down procedures for systematically learning and analysing experience (ibid.). But what distinguishes these women, they suggest, "is that their strategies for knowing grow out of their very embeddedness in human relationships and their alertness to the details of everyday life". This includes a felt need to understand those who impinge on their life, even though they may remain during this period socially isolated from others, and this was certainly the case in my experience leading up to and during my adolescent years. With the exception of standing my ground in respect of my desire to go away to college, I had not then developed the confidence or sense of self, voice or mind to speak out. As suggested by Belenky *et al.* (1986:86), I engaged in a process of self-

expression by talking to myself, as a basis for gaining voice and investigating the world, a strategy which I still employ, and is, I suggest, one part of the “double dialectic of meaning making” (Lomax, 1999); that being, making meaning for oneself, the other being, and making meaning in dialogue with others, through writing or other forms of representation.

### **Autobiography as a Vehicle For Inquiry**

Drawing on the “authority of my experience” as opposed to “the authority of reason” (Parker, 1998:118), autobiographical writing has been a significant spiral of inquiry in my research. The narrative form facilitating a turn to action in my case.

Usher (1988), exploring the use of autobiography and the self, cites two stories of self that might be told. One is a modernist self that appears by the act of inscription in the writing of an autobiography to be fixed, but which he argues is illusory. He critiques what he calls the “appropriation of autobiography by an educational discourse of experience” and he challenges what he describes as “the assumptions of modernity concerning the self, experience and the developmental process”; in other words “the autonomous developing ego” (1988:20). He argues that:

“...to tell the story of the self in terms of a journey of discovery is not simply to reflect [on] and accurately depict the literal journey of a life and by doing so reveal its meanings but rather to tell a story through a particular kind of modernist discourse, a culturally encoded meta story” (Usher, 1988:20).

He argues that to tell a modernist story of this kind is to simply reflect at the individual level what Lyotard (1984) calls ‘the grand narratives’ – the significant one here being achievement over life itself. This type of telling is consistent with a humanistic perspective of self. Autobiography serves to construct a human

presence in the text, providing what Mann (1992:278) calls “a glimpse of the person” behind the text.

By contrast, a postmodern (structuralist) story of self points out the multiplicity of self and the notion of a shifting or decentred self. Access to the past is appreciated as problematic, recoverable only in traces. Such a story is a reconstruction of both the self and the past, a process of recreation and reinvention of the self. Usher suggests that a post-structuralist story poses difficult questions, for example:

“Is the self fully in control of events and experience?... Is there a ‘core’ unchanging self or rather is identity shifting and fragmented?” (1998:20).

There are, according to Usher (ibid.), “no neat answers to these questions”.

“As a site of interplay between the humanistic vision of autonomous egos and postmodern decentered selves, actual autobiographies stand at the intersection of the individual and the social, of agency and culture” (Usher, 1998:21).

The key to understanding a postmodern account of self is in the appreciation of decentred time in which past and future reflect the complexity of lived time, enfolded in the past and unfolding in the future, in other words, the self as a work in process.

## **Conclusion**

What I have done in this chapter is to explain and explore two stories, ostensibly about choice and self determination; life stories or events that may provide a trace of the development of my self, voice and mind in the context of past experience and my present professional interest in supporting others in an educational context work through issues of finding voice.

Developing the stories in the context of life history has, I suggest, enabled me to explore and make connections between the past and present. Specifically, the stories have enabled me to draw out and gain insight into the process of moving between silence and voice, particularly through the development of subjective knowing, which I have sought to analyse and critique in relation to the work of Belenky *et al.* (1986).

Finally, I want to say why I believe this piece of writing and inquiry is significant to my Ph.D. account. Witherell and Noddings (1991:3)<sup>59</sup> suggest “that to educate is to take seriously both the quest for life’s meaning and the meaning of individual lives”. In exploring my own stories it is perhaps evident that I take them seriously, not only as part of a quest for life’s meaning, but also to show how my own subjective knowing has enabled me to take the meaning of individual lives of others, namely those of my students, some of whose accounts (including personal and professional narratives) I draw on elsewhere in this thesis. In the wider context of my professional role and desire to become an effective reflective educator, the power of narrative and dialogue has served as a springboard for ethical action in my work and for a number of my students. For me, that involves developing an ethic of care in the teaching and learning relationship, but that is the subject of another chapter.

On a personal level, these stories remind me that I am no stranger to adversity. In the first story, I am driven by strong instincts to survive and in the second, by a determination to return to school, seizing the opportunities for social mobility education ultimately affords. These same instincts and determination are, I suggest, characteristic of my quest to become an academic, in the context of

---

<sup>59</sup> In “Stories lives tell: narrative and dialogue in education”.

pursuing this inquiry and persevering with this degree. In Chapter Five,<sup>60</sup> I describe the difficulties a woman in a new university can experience in being taken seriously as an academic and how the research assessment exercise has served to widen the gap between those who do research and those who teach; leaving those who are employed for their educative skills at a disadvantage in becoming recognised as research active. In the course of this inquiry, I have had to make a choice, to keep bemoaning my fate as a victim of circumstance, or take the risk toward becoming an academic by putting myself in the public domain through writing, presenting conference papers and submitting articles to journals. I have taken the latter path in my own quest for a meaningful life in education, as I address through my inquiry and writing questions of the kind “How do I improve my practice?”. Through the communication of my own living theory, I attempt to educate and influence the social formation.

---

<sup>60</sup> Entitled “Finding voice in the academy: towards a politics of articulation, contesting power in the academy from an oppositional site”.

## **CHAPTER FIVE: FINDING VOICE IN THE ACADEMY: TOWARDS A POLITICS OF ARTICULATION, CONTESTING POWER IN THE ACADEMY FROM AN OPPOSITIONAL SITE**

### **Introduction**

In this chapter I propose to explore the experience of finding voice in the academy, as a woman within a new university and thus in the higher education sector. Drawing on the authority of my experience and supporting literature, I aim to provide a glimpse of what it can be like for a woman to become an academic in the context of a 'man's world'. My critique suggests that the gatekeepers of the academy have constructed a privileged discourse that serves to uphold the status quo and protect their power base to the exclusion of others. I further suggest that this power base needs to be contested if other voices are to be heard. I propose that the politics of articulation might be best contested by a critical discourse that speaks from the margins to the centre and, in so doing, reveals, interrogates and reconstructs the power relations that serve to silence those other voices.

To speak from the margins about the politics of articulation, and to see the margins as a place of radical critique from where the voice of authority might be contested, is to know there is authority in different epistemologies that are not utilised or favoured by academic tradition. The support of different epistemologies is evidenced by the work of Gilligan (1977), who suggests that women's moral development is more likely to be influenced by relational concerns in precedence to concerns of justice. Similarly, the work of Belenky *et al.* (1986) identifies the lived experience (socialisation) of women as having a direct influence on ways of knowing, and through their research they identify five epistemological perspectives, based on women's experiences, that reflect the development of self, voice and mind. These perspectives are silence (an



experience characterised by feeling deaf and dumb); received knowledge (which involves listening to the voice of others, usually those in authority); subjective knowledge (where one learns to trust one's gut feelings as a basis for self expression); procedural knowledge (in other words, the voice of reason, which includes forms of separate and connected ways of knowing, each with distinct gendered legacies); and constructed knowledge (in which one is able to integrate other perspectives in the process of knowledge construction). As such, my critique is informed by a different way of knowing, one that is relational and connected, that honours subjective as well as procedural ways of knowing, and which recognises that the politics of lived experience provide a site for the construction of knowledge, the process of articulation, and the reclamation of voice and mind.

The location of the margins as a site of political resistance against oppressive boundaries of race, class and sex, is taken up by hooks (1991:145) who advocates "choosing the margin as a space of radical openness". She asks, "do we position ourselves on the side of the colonising mentality? Or do we continue to stand in political resistance with the oppressed" (ibid.). Her choice is clearly the latter, from which she suggests that a space can be created which provides access to the "pleasure and power of knowing" (ibid.). The choice, she argues, is crucial because "it shapes and determines our response to existing cultural practice and our capacity to envision new alternative oppositional aesthetic acts" (ibid.). Furthermore, she argues that "it informs the way we speak about these issues", and that language is itself "a place of struggle" (ibid.). Similarly, Oakley, speaking specifically about gender and the university culture, argues that the marginalised are more likely to have a vision about alternative forms of knowledge production, saying:

"The marginalized live in more than one world; developing a capacity to understand multiple worlds is a condition of their survival. Intrinsic to this capacity is the art of making

connections. And making connections is surely one critical definition of knowledge, whatever world we inhabit” (2001:xiii).

This capacity is also appreciated by hooks, who says:<sup>61</sup>

“Living as we did - on the edge - we developed a particular way of seeing reality. We looked from both the outside in and from the inside out. We focused our attention on the center as well as the margin. We understood both” (1991:149).

In a positive frame, hooks further describes the margin as not solely a site of deprivation, but positively constructed as a site of “radical possibility” (ibid.). This is an important insight, if speaking from the margins is to be appreciated as a constructive critique, one that may serve to reconstruct power relations, rather than one of collective despair, with the potential for nihilism.

### **The Gendered Nature of University Organisations**

Hearn (2001:71) identifies three features that characterise the gendered structure of universities. The first is the exclusion of women, only admitting them to the universities in Cambridge, Oxford and London in the 1860s and 1870s, with the first academic posts for women being created in the 1890s; secondly, half of the university places at lower levels are now taken up by women; thirdly, men continue to dominate the top of universities in disciplines and management, with the first female Vice Chancellor in the UK being appointed in 1995. He states:

“Women’s position and experience in university and other organizations is clearly affected by the form and structure of management, the gendering of organizations, and the relation of men to management” (Hearn, 2001:70).

---

<sup>61</sup> hooks (1991) in the preface to *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center*, cited in *Yearning: Race, Gender and Cultural Politics*.

He further argues that management is a social activity based on hierarchy and power, with men dominating top management positions; one reflected in academic institutions. The homosociality of management that has dominated both private and public sector organisations “has also been endemic in the universities”, and he describes universities as “a site of male culture” which include forms such as “the gentleman’s club” and “the men’s room”, bound by a culture of patriarchy and feudalism (fealty), a legacy of traditional organisation in universities (2001:74).

### **The Demands of the New Universities**

In the world of academia you have to learn to write if you want a voice in the academy. This has now become imperative to academic survival for individuals and organisations, since the research assessment exercise ties funding to output and publications. New universities are in the business of survival, and whilst many like Middlesex continue to build on their traditional expertise of teaching and learning, and are focused on building this empire with course expansion (particularly in new international markets), they are also aware that reputation can be enhanced or diminished by the rating the university gets from its research output. Although there have always been academics who have been research active, it has not been the case for the majority in the new university (old polytechnic) sector. Many tutors in this sector came into higher education from a practice base, bringing with them experience of vocational fields and a greater interest in learning and development in these fields than in academic research.

In the context of a business school which has traditionally relied on a substantial postgraduate and post-experience market, tutors have enjoyed the experience of working with mature students at both the early stages of their professional lives and in mid-career (and increasingly in mid-life), as senior practitioners make the transition to strategic positions in organisations, or career life changes. But these

spaces are likely to be squeezed as more emphasis and resources are devoted to the overseas market. This strategy will undoubtedly impact on those tutors whose academic authority, expertise and capacity for knowledge creation is informed or resides in the postgraduate professional context. It is the challenge and efficacy of theory and practice, as developed in relation to the real life challenges of professional practitioners and their organisations, that many business school tutors have developed a portfolio of consulting in and to organisations. This consultancy work frequently includes action research; however, it does not generally translate into academic publications, and as an activity does not count in the way that publications in refereed journals count for the research assessment exercise. Thus, knowledge production is defined exclusively in the written mode, in a form that traditionally separates theory and practice, and where the latter takes the high ground. This has certainly been my experience and one shared by many of my colleagues at Middlesex University.

In the foreword to *Gender and the Restructured University*, Oakley (2001:xi) asks the question “What is happening in higher education today?”. She suggests that a set of associated concepts, including globalisation, privatisation, commodification and managerialism, to name but a few, are changing the culture in academia. This is how she describes their impact:

“On the level of personal experience, these characterizations reduce to the perception among many people working in universities that their places of work are becoming more and more like factories; staff ‘man’ assembly lines in a tightly timetabled and controlled culture, supervised by managers and bosses whose prime concern is with discrete and easily quantifiable deliverables that roll off the assembly line: students are taught – whatever ‘teaching’ means; research is carried out – but valued for its financial, rather than intellectual contribution against ‘overheads’; work is published – with the contribution of the publications noted to schema of assessment and ‘performativity’ rather than to knowledge” Oakley (2001:xi).

Oakley further argues that the institutionalisation of these practices compounds discrimination, and where they lead to an absence of justice and equity they result in the experience felt by many academics, who she suggests are “experiencing an increasing sense of alienation in their everyday working lives from the central goals that led many of us into universities in the first place” (ibid.).

Furthermore, her critique suggests that this is a moral issue and not solely a managerial one. I would agree. Commodification of education and academia is, I suggest, the biggest threat. First and foremost, the expansion of the international market changes the teaching and learning relationship in my discipline,<sup>62</sup> particularly at postgraduate level. My argument is that knowledge becomes a commodity to be ‘taught’ to students who are without experience of a professional or organisational context, rather than a process of education and critique negotiated by experienced practitioners in dialogue with peers and their tutors. Secondly, Hearn (2001:78) suggests that the influence of student voice is now reduced to “the ubiquitous feedback form”. Whilst this is probably true in the main, I would argue that student influence and that of their sponsoring organisations find new ways of making their voice heard to academic managers in the guise of the customer.

Whilst concern for academic quality is considered to be a management issue, it is not only their concern. I would suggest that most academics are committed to the continuous enhancement of quality in the teaching and learning relationship. Taking the commercial perspective of the customer, for example, the espoused notion that ‘the customer is always right’ distorts the academic relationship between tutor and student, and with the wider academy. When students and their sponsors perceive education as a commodity, this leads to unreasonable demands

---

<sup>62</sup> Human resource management and development.

to accept work that does not meet the academic standard and leads to complaints against staff who are seen to stand in the way of this consumer activity. Like many of my colleagues, in recent years I have experienced complaints of this kind. Critical management theory suggests that management is not a “neutral activity” (Alveson and Willmott, 1996:15), and in the face of the student as customer/complainant, I would suggest that management sets itself in opposition to academic staff as it bends over backwards to please the customer. The consequence of such practice is that academic tutors are denied an equal voice amidst this transaction. Furthermore, academic tutors are treated without regard for their professional integrity, or recognised for the values that underpin their vocation to the educative endeavour itself.

Publications can also be viewed as a commodity. In the first instance, where recruitment and appointment to academic posts are subjugated to the purchase of a publications record; and secondly, for academics for whom writing and publishing is new territory, left to ‘go it alone’ without mentoring and support, creates an experience which is neither healthy nor developmental, and whereby individuals feel pressured to ‘go public’ before they are ready, with consequent health risks to those who experience the process as stressful.

Brooks (2001:18), writing on restructuring the knowledge base of universities, argues that universities are being repositioned as part of a global knowledge economy, the consequence of which leads to an emphasis on ‘exchange value’ rather than ‘use value’ (Willmott, cited in Brooks, 2001:19), a phenomenon caricatured as the “McUniversity” (Parker and Jary, 1995).

### **The Historical Context of my Journey in Academia**

At the time writing this thesis I have been in an academic post for thirteen years, yet it is only now as I proceed to bring my Ph.D. to a conclusion that I am

confidant to put pen to paper, trusting my gut feeling and the efficacy of my experience, spurred on by the knowledge that there is a range of literature that supports my perspective and critique, and yet knowing that even this new found confidence does not guarantee immunity from rejection or acceptance in academic circles, including some regarded as 'alternative'.

I joined Middlesex University Business School initially as a Senior Lecturer in 1989, then as a part-timer following the birth of my son and later, whilst on maternity leave, teaching on the part-time postgraduate Diploma in Personnel Management one evening a week (the same programme that I graduated from the year before). At the end of my maternity leave I returned to work full-time, working for a London local authority where I worked as a Human Resource Development Manager.

It was my experience of design and delivery of learning events, and my understanding of the processes and politics of management and organisational learning and change, along with proven ability to work with adults at all levels in the authority, that opened the door to academic life for me. At the end of that year, I was offered a full-time post as programme leader and course tutor to the HRM Diploma programme. I should point out that from a career perspective this was a sideways move, the salary at the time being similar to that of a Principal Officer (PO1/2) in local government (though nowadays the gap has widened considerably with similar responsibilities in local government being paid at a much higher level). However, the primary attraction at the time was the potential for flexible working that an academic post offered to me as the mother of a new-born child.

Hearn (2001:79) notes the "long-term decreasing relative pay for academics". Ironically, the key benefit associated with term-time work and associated holiday was bought out within a year or so of my employment in higher education.

Indeed, the demands of the job and working arrangements have changed radically since I joined Middlesex University, such that work related stress and work life balance have become real issues for individuals and organisations. Let me digress on this issue for a moment before continuing with my historical journey in academia.

### *Work life balance*

Work life balance is a contemporary employment issue, and one central government has felt it necessary to encourage employers to address. Indeed, in April 2003, the government launched a work life balance initiative. Coincidentally, I was speaking with a colleague at a European Business Ethics Conference at Cambridge about this very issue on the day of the government launch. Subsequently, we published our paper, Frame and Hartog (2003), setting out to explore the rhetoric and reality of implementing work life balance. We put forward the position that work life balance was not just a women's issue or an employment issue, but rather one that concerns us all, and as such it is a wider social issue. From this perspective we framed a communitarian argument and looked at three organisational case examples, one of which was a modern university in the London region. In this case we found ourselves looking behind the stories told in response to a questionnaire that had been used by the organisation to facilitate the implementation of a work life balance policy into practice. Let me give you an example of what we were grappling with in our analysis:

“When asked ‘to calculate hours worked’, employees reported difficulty in answering this question. This caused us to speculate why this might be so, and we formulated the following questions based on our experience and knowledge of similar organisations:

- Is it the case that people don't really know the number of hours worked. If so, what might account for this?



- Do people feel confused or overwhelmed about hours worked or unduly concerned that in trying to estimate them they may leave themselves open to requests to do more work?
- Do the formulae used for work programme planning blur and deny the real time and effort taken to do the job?
- Does the system contribute to inequity in distribution where work programmes may appear weighted in favour of some, and not others?" (Frame and Hartog, 2003:361-362).

By problematising this and other questions, we wanted to reveal the complexity of the situation. This strategy is, I suggest, crucial if we are to get any real debate in organisations as to the complexity of implementing such policies into practice, and if we are to expose the motivation and hidden agenda behind the implementation of some work life balance initiatives, as highlighted by our second case example, a modern university department in the Midlands, that being one of performance management presented in the guise of 'workload planning'.

Whilst some academic managers may think that academics can and should be more productive, the cost in terms of work-overload will ultimately be a disservice to those employees who are already giving their all, and to the educative function itself. That academic management may think in this way or that government shares this view (despite its rhetoric on work life balance) should be in no doubt. In November 2003, the Vice Chancellor at Middlesex University wrote to every academic, informing them that they were required to participate in a "Transparency Review in 2003/4", and complete a time allocation template. We were advised that this information was required for an annual return to analyse the organisation's expenditure between teaching, research and other activities. It would be used to put a case to the government that highlighted the true costs of higher education and to support the organisation's case that higher education is currently under-funded.

Whilst I do not doubt the commitment of the Vice Chancellor to make a case for more funding, like the work life balance questionnaire previously mentioned, I have questions regarding the formulae that is being used to calculate the workload of academics in this exercise, as I do not believe it adequately accounts for the work being done. Additionally, I do not believe for a moment that increased funding will be on offer without strings attached; for example, the move towards a three semester year is already well underway and is being brought in by the back door via summer school programmes.

### **The Historical Context of my Journey in Academia - Continued**

My appointment was supported by a woman labour economist who managed the new Masters programme in HRM, and who had spoken highly of my work as a student. Additionally, I was supported by the then Head of the School of Management, who also had a management learning and development background. He encouraged me in the early years and invited me to work with him on research contracts.<sup>63</sup> In addition, we worked together on many other consulting contracts, including the design and delivery of an in-company MBA by action learning. Indeed, he was passionate about action learning and its contribution to management learning, so much so that for a while he was the Revan's Professor for The International Foundation for Action Learning (a practitioner foundation with links to Lancaster University). It was with his blessing that I, with colleagues, took the MAPOD forward to validation in 1995.

He was to retire shortly afterwards, and thereafter there was a power vacuum in the business school in respect of expertise in management learning, which has never been filled (despite several attempts to appoint a professor in this field).

---

<sup>63</sup> Such as "Doctors into management", a national research project that was commissioned by the NHS steering group and led by the Middlesex University team during the early 1990s.

His co-director on the NHS research project went on to lead a research centre in my academic group around issues of management and quality, and working practices in the NHS. But despite funding and the creation of research posts, I was not included in his plans. Naturally, I was frustrated that my experience was being ignored, but I understood that I was not in his patronage since I had been appointed to my position over his preferred candidate by the now retired head of school.

As colleagues sought alternative alliances to support their careers and projects, I was to find myself increasingly isolated without a powerful ally or mentor. There was now increased pressure in the university to be research active and published. All courses were now modularised, which problematised the learning relationship for many staff and students, reducing the teaching and learning relationship to one of fragmented bite-sized chunks; though on MAPOD our response could be described as one of creative compliance by fashioning MAPOD modules into an open framework within the context of a holistic course programme, unconstrained by timetabling, allowing staff and students to enjoy the continuity of a course-based learning relationship.

Having completed a part-time Masters degree by action learning at Lancaster University in 1993 (whilst working at Middlesex University), I decided that I needed to embark on a Ph.D. I felt the 'writing was on the wall' for practitioner academics, and that job security would in time become an issue, particularly if I were not seen to be a 'real academic'. In 1996, I registered with the Centre For Action Research in Professional Practice at the University of Bath, to undertake their Ph.D. development programme. I wanted to do research that would draw on my experience, that had real meaning for me, and that would add value to and understanding of my work. I did not know I was going to embrace 'first person research', and I knew nothing of educational action research, the approach I have taken here, but I knew that I did not want to do research 'out there'.

I had purposefully and carefully selected the University of Bath because of its humanistic and action research approach. I intuitively felt it would provide a supportive context for the work that I was engaged with. I had opted not to do a Ph.D. at Middlesex University primarily because there was no longer a professor of management learning, and thus there was not the expertise to support my research and development. I was at the time one of a handful of staff to get some financial support to study outside Middlesex University, though initially I was expected to recoup my fees by generating income through consultancy activities. Before long, colleagues were told that if they wanted to do a Ph.D. they had to do it in-house. Doctoral thesis supervision was part of the research assessment criteria, and naturally Middlesex University wanted to recoup their investment.

Very few full-time colleagues were pursuing a Ph.D. and, at that time, neither was any other woman in the business school. Many simply felt their work life balance would give if they took on such a commitment (something that I was only to appreciate in hindsight). Many of the Ph.D. students were young men drawn from postgraduate programmes, and increasingly vacancies were being reconstructed as research posts within academic groups, leaving more and more of the teaching to others. Getting support was not straightforward either. I was required to submit an annual research plan and justify my case. I felt that continued support for my thesis was increasingly in 'the lap of the gods', and it was only in recent years that some of the rationale of the opposition came to light, including the mistaken belief that I had previously registered for a Ph.D. at Lancaster University and was assumed to have failed. Of course, I had been to Lancaster University, but to study for my M.A. in Management Learning between 1991 and 1993. My case was not helped by beliefs held by members of the research committee that action research did not count, and their irritation that I was not making adequate progress publishing. Hearn notes that:

“the intensification of management and of academic work has included in the 1990s a reduced managerial tolerance for those staff, men and women, who were [assumed to be] less productive in research or less effective in other ways” (2001:81).

Combined with a lack of organisational competence in respect of developmental support for academics, what I believe I experienced was a form of institutional discrimination that particularly worked against women in the academy.

To cap it all, I was struggling to find voice at the University of Bath, having had my confidence shattered by a careless response toward my diploma paper submission, which continued to create anxiety up to and during the period I was writing my M.Phil.-Ph.D. transfer document. Boud (2002) framed his professorial inaugural lecture with the argument that ‘assessment hurts’. The decision to fail the piece of work is not what I am contesting here, but the act of carelessness by which those responsible for the assessment process handled it, an act whereby ‘the voice of authority’ was to render me silent for a considerable period of time.

As a student, I experienced the contradiction of a centre that espouses humanistic action inquiry, yet failed to engage in the assessment process in an enquiring and reflective way. Had they done so, those in authority might have established why I had written the piece and presented the paper in the experimental form I had. In other words, what I needed from those in authority was an approach to assessment that worked with what was there, rather than what was missing. Therein lies the difference between what Belenky *et al.* (1986) call separate and connected knowing. The former, a procedure and form of critical thinking which is characterised by what Elbow (cited in Belenky *et al.*, 1986:104) calls “the doubting game”, involves “putting something on trial to see whether it is wanting or not” (ibid.). The latter “builds on the subjectivists’ conviction that the most trustworthy knowledge comes from personal experience rather than the

pronouncements of authorities” and where “connected knowers develop procedures for gaining access to other people’s knowledge”, primarily through “empathy” (Belenky *et al.*, 1986:112).

Freire (1971) describes the critical educator as a ‘midwife’, who assists in the emergence of consciousness, encouraging the student to speak in their own active voice; in other words, someone who practises a strategy of power with, rather than power over.

The perturbation I experienced as a student has enabled me to appreciate how careful academics need to be in managing the learning and assessment process. Even where self and peer assessment is included in the process, as on MAPOD, the balance of power lies with the academic. Perhaps it is precisely because of my own perturbation that I have come to know myself as a “living contradiction” (Whitehead, 2000:93) in respect of my own practice, when I have failed to live up to my values in practice, the experience moving one to find a solution that improves one’s practice. Whitehead argues that:

“...the inclusion of I as a living contradiction in educational enquiries can lead to the creation of research methodologies that are distinctly ‘educational’ and cannot be reduced to social science methodologies” (2000:93).

In Middlesex University Business School (MUBS), those academics failing to meet the status of being deemed to be ‘research active’ were having the question asked “What contribution is so and so making to the university?”. This was not being asked directly of the individual but to academic group leaders and within the management team. At the same time, new formulae were being constructed to calculate teaching hours. Whilst there were those fortunate enough to have protected hours for academic research, the rest of us (deemed not to be research active) were to find ourselves with increased teaching workloads. Since MAPOD

ran with small groups (between twelve and twenty students per cohort), I was soon to find myself in the spotlight and identified as someone who could make a bigger contribution by teaching larger groups. Hearn (2001:77) refers to this as “massification”, which involves teaching more students with less financial resources per head.

Ironically, it was whilst writing my first ethics conference paper with a colleague in the university’s HRM department (a colleague with whom I had previously taught and who had worked with me on a consulting and action research project for a multinational car manufacturer), that I discovered that I was one of those whose contribution was being questioned. Talking it through with her, I was to realise that I was not doing any less than other colleagues; indeed, I was probably doing more than some who were in the spotlight, but not for their lack of contribution, but precisely for their contribution. The major difference, apart from our gender, was that I was invisible. A position, I suggest, not uncommon for a woman in a man’s world, particularly where fraternalistic patriarchy is the norm. Despite feeling pressure to concentrate on my Ph.D., I felt in a double bind, needing to prove myself to senior academics in MUBS. As a result, I volunteered to run the next HRM and Ethics Conference at Middlesex University in order to raise my profile, and to show that I was capable of making a contribution to the research agenda. This is what Oakley (2001) means by ‘credentialism’.

By this stage, I had begun to identify a number of conferences relevant to my area of interest and expertise. However, given funding restrictions, attendance at conferences was limited to one or two a year, and it was increasingly the case that attendance was predicated on the condition that you wrote and presented a paper. It was in the conference arena that I began to test out my ideas and writing in the public domain. I targeted conferences on ethics in HRM and business, reflective practice, and critical theory and management learning. Through doing

so, I began to experience feedback and critique from academic peers and, importantly, I began to receive encouraging feedback from key individuals whose work I respected. It was really only at this stage that I began to take my Ph.D. supervisor's comments that "I had something to contribute" seriously. Lomax (1999), specifically talking about action learning, describes "a double dialectic of meaning making", in which the individual writes in the first instance to make sense and create meaning for one's self, and that the second and other side of the dialectical relationship is concerned with the representation of meaning to others.

## Homeplaces

Speaking and writing from the margins enables and empowers one to 'tell it like it is'. This serves to break the silence that institutionalises oppression and discrimination. In evoking the senses to imagine and recall the experience of safety, security and nurture that her grandmother's house provided her as a young girl, crossing the tracks back to what had been the racially segregated area where black folks lived, hooks (1991:42) introduces us to the concept of 'homeplaces'. She ascribes the task of making a homeplace to the women, a place of affirmation and healing from domination, fashioned as a community of resistance. Her story resonated with me when I discovered it whilst writing a conference paper,<sup>64</sup> in which I described a journey to my grandmother's house that evoked for me similar sentiments of belonging and community. I was at that time preoccupied in creating a context for learning on MAPOD based on principles of community, belonging and inclusion, a place in which I could 'hold my students well', and develop myself as a reflective practitioner. hooks is not naïve in her nostalgia for home, since she acknowledges that she had to turn away from home to develop her critical voice.

---

<sup>64</sup> "Becoming a reflective practitioner". Unpublished paper presented to the First International Reflective Practice Conference, in Worcester, July 2000.



“Home is that place which enables and promotes varied and everchanging perspectives, a place where one discovers new ways of seeing reality, frontiers of difference” (hooks, 1991:148).

The writing process is itself a place of struggle. Each paper that I have taken to a conference has been a part of my own struggle for articulation. On this issue, hooks says:

“The oppressed struggle in language to recover ourselves, to reconcile, to renew. Our words are not without meaning, they are an action, a resistance. Language is a place of struggle” (1991:146).

Conferences are one source of homeplaces, but they are not immune from patriarchy as they are often dominated by what Hearn describes as the male intellectual gang. Hearn suggests that, notwithstanding resistance, knowledge creation and what counts as knowledge is still dominated by men.

“What has counted and still counts as knowledge has been severely gendered, so that women’s relationship to knowledge and its production and reproduction has been diminished and devalued. For the most part universities, dominated as they are by men as academics and managers, do not produce neutral, still less emancipatory knowledge” (Hearn, 2001:73-74).

The shadow side of this culture hides the logic of domination and this can be disguised in the form of well meaning but misplaced feedback that serves to keep intact the logic of domination inherent in a given form of procedural knowledge. I make this claim based on the quite different forms of opinion I have received on the same paper, where feedback reinforces the orthodoxy of a particular position to the exclusion of an alternative point of view. Thus, in the development of self, voice and mind, the new academic, and specifically those writing in a different voice, might do well to reflect on the position and location

in the academy that those who give feedback are coming from (assuming of course, you can work this out within the context of blind refereeing).

### **Working With Autobiography: Going Home**

Going home has proved to be a strategy of liberation for me. I do not mean literally going home, but metaphorically speaking, revisiting my earliest experience of homeplaces in the context of autobiographical narrative, as a form of writing and inquiry which I have used in constructing this thesis, in conference papers, and with students in my teaching and learning strategies on the MAPOD programme. It is a strategy suggested by Goldberg if you want to learn to write. The idea is quite simple insofar as you can write about what you know, draw out your experience and, from an academic perspective, subject your experience to critical inquiry.

“It is very important to go home if you want your work to be whole. You don’t have to move in with your parents again and collect your weekly allowance, but you must claim where you come from and look deeply into it. Come to honor and embrace it, or at the least, accept it” (Goldberg, 1986:146).

Specifically, autobiographical writing has helped me explore my history and understanding of myself as a learner. It has enabled me to review my formative years and reflect on the values and experiences that shaped my development, and in more recent times it has empowered me to test out my ideas in the public domain and learn to live my values in my practice, in the context of my work in education.

Writing this chapter has been a form of autobiographical narrative. By bringing the personal experience of my professional life into the research text, I aim to illuminate the context of my enquiry and understanding of what it means to

engage in a self-study of my own practice and history of development as a woman academic in a new university.

“Although we usually think of writing as a mode of telling about the social world, writing up is not just a mopping up activity at the end of the research project. Writing is also a way of ‘knowing’ a method of discovery and analysis. By writing in different ways we discover new aspects of our topic and our relationship to it. Form and content are inseparable” (Richardson, 1994:516).

Richardson (1994:517) describes writing as a “dynamic and creative” process, saying that in qualitative research “the writer is the instrument”. She asks, “How do we put ourselves in our own texts, and with what consequences?”. Her response centres on the deconstruction of metanarratives that figure in the postmodern stance.

“In some ways, ‘knowing’ is easier, however, because post modernism recognizes the situational limitations of the knower. Qualitative writers are off the hook, so to speak. They don’t have to try to play God, writing as disembodied omniscient narrators claiming universal, atemporal general knowledge; they can eschew the questionable metanarrative of scientific objectivity and still have plenty to say as situated speakers, subjectivities engaged in knowing/telling about the world as they perceive it” (Richardson, 1994:518).

As a form of postmodern thinking, Richardson recommends poststructuralism, which links language, subjectivity, social organisation and power. Furthermore, she argues that: “Language is not the result of one’s individuality; rather, language constructs the individual’s subjectivity in ways that are historically and locally specific” (ibid.).

By speaking and writing from the margins to the centre, it is precisely my subjectivity, located historically and specifically in the context of my local university organisation, from which I have set out to critique my lived experience as a woman in a new university struggling to develop herself as an academic. A

critique which explores my learning trajectory towards reclaiming self, voice and mind.

## **Conclusion**

In this chapter I have constructed a critical account written from the margins, reflecting on and interrogating my journey of learning and development in my quest to become an academic. Drawing on relevant literature, I have argued that this journey and my inquiry is situated in a man's world, in which and despite resistance such as this critique, it is a struggle to be heard. Furthermore, I have argued that it is precisely by writing and critiquing one's lived experience from the margin to the centre that creates a space that empowers the 'other' to come to voice, and in so doing, arrive at a place where one can reclaim a sense of self, voice and mind.

## **CHAPTER SIX: MAPOD - THE EARLY DAYS (1995-1998): A REFLECTIVE REVIEW**

### **Introduction**

In this chapter I review the reflective process of my inquiry as an higher education tutor in the context of my educative relations on the MAPOD programme by reviewing the early days of the degree programme, spanning the life of the first two cohorts and covering the period from 1995 to 1998. I do this by telling three stories and by asking questions such as “How do I understand my practice?” and “What is going on here?”. They are addressed by answers and analysed with reference to the espoused values and goals of my educational practice and relevant literature. I have chosen to include these particular stories because:

- They provide an insight into understanding my practice in the early days.
- They indicate the process of grappling involved in learning to place my ‘I’ at the centre of my inquiry.
- They provide examples of how I experienced the denial of my values in practice.
- They show how I came to know myself as a living contradiction.
- They show how I try to find a way forward to overcome contradictions and improve the rationality and justice of my practice in support of loving and life affirming educative relations.

### **Background**

A self-study requires that the researcher is able to place their ‘I’ at the centre of their inquiry. However, when I began this research journey I did not understand this. Much of my attention and awareness was drawn to the design and content of the MAPOD learning programme and learning relationships with colleagues.

I began my initial written account<sup>65</sup> by suggesting that first I needed to understand my practice before I could inquire into it. Citing Rowland, I stated:

“Firstly I could only begin to improve my practice as a tutor once I had faced my own sense of failure. We all fail at times, and these occasions can become valuable points of growth in our development” (1993:5).

In this diploma transfer paper I suggested that the above quotation had resonated with me precisely because it spoke directly to my lived experience of not knowing how to begin a first person inquiry in my professional context. This perspective reflects my lived experience during the first year of MAPOD. By the time MAPOD 2 had begun, I had written a first account of my life story, the process of which I described in my diploma paper as being part of my emergent process of becoming an action researcher. Emergent because the learning curve involved in working with a life story necessitates a move from description to reflection, turning the mirror inwards to explore the history and experience that connects my personal and professional life. Though at this point my reflective critique scratched the surface, nonetheless I had begun to see links between my personal and professional narrative regarding the development of ‘voice’ and ‘mind’.

Through writing my life story/learning history, I had come to recognise silence as a barrier to voice, and come to appreciate how the experience of silence left me feeling inadequate, reticent and unable to speak my mind in the face of authority; in other words, how silence was an impediment to learning. I was aware that my silence had been rendered by dominant voices of authority such as parents and teachers, and I believed that sharing this process with students might

---

<sup>65</sup> A Diploma Transfer Paper, May 1997, at the University of Bath.

help them recognise similar experiences in their own stories. This was to influence my thinking about how to create a space for learning on MAPOD 2.

### **Goals for Learning on MAPOD**

The primary goal of the MAPOD programme was for students to become autonomous learners. In particular, we believed that the goal of autonomy would enable students to learn how to think for themselves, develop the capacity for critique and be able to speak their mind. Silence and the notion that those in authority know best was antithetical to this goal. The primary strategy we employed to facilitate student autonomy in learning was ‘Action Learning’ (Revans, 1971), which we employed on MAPOD as a vehicle for managing assignments. Action learning is a social process involving the management of learning in small groups, known as ‘action learning sets’. On MAPOD, these are tutor facilitated. The central tenet of the Revan’s approach is that questioning insight is more valuable than traditional programmed knowledge. Students are given the freedom to choose projects relevant to them to pursue as their assignments (with a broad link to the module topic and purpose), thus self-directed learning is part of this strategy. Furthermore, to facilitate student autonomy in learning, we introduced peer assessment in a power-sharing exercise with the MAPOD students.

The second goal of MAPOD was to create an environment in which a community of learners might emerge. Linked to this was the idea that a person-centred learning environment would provide the conditions in which learning could be safe and learners thrive. The work of Harrison (1987) on organisation culture and his seminal paper<sup>66</sup> had specifically influenced my thinking in this respect, particularly the notion of creating a ‘safe haven’ which would, in the

---

<sup>66</sup> Entitled “Putting love back into the organisation”.

context of loving and life-affirming relations, facilitate the time and space for reflection for learners in the face of organisational change and adversity.<sup>67</sup> Such a space recognised that it was important to support the emotional growth as well as the intellectual of the student. Linked to this goal was a co-operative approach to the design of the residential workshops in which students and tutors could share responsibility for learning, both contributing to the design and delivery of workshops.

### **Story 1: The First MAPOD Block Week**

The MAPOD began in 1995 with a residential week at the Hendon Hall Hotel. We had eighteen students, three core tutors to facilitate the action learning sets and two additional tutors who would contribute to specific modules during the first year.

The purpose of the block week was to provide an induction to the programme and explain the co-operative strategy of learning and development, as well as providing a framework for the first module.<sup>68</sup> It was also intended that action learning sets would be formed during this block. I was one of the three core tutors, working alongside another tutor to facilitate this event. I was not residential, though my co-facilitator along with one of the other core tutors was.

We had met as a tutor team to plan our approach and contributions to this week. It was agreed that I would present a session on the philosophy of adult learning that reflected the values and beliefs of the tutor team, drawing on ideas from Rogers (1983) and Knowles (1984). In addition, I would lead a session later in the week to introduce action learning, drawing on the thinking of Revans (1971)

---

<sup>67</sup> Many students were managing redundancy programmes and/or dealing with the emotional fallout of organisational change and survival interventions.

<sup>68</sup> Entitled “Individual learning and support strategies”.



and the critique of action learning by Logan and Stuart (1987), who point out that activity and experience are not the same; drawing our attention to the limitations of action without reflection. My co-facilitator was to lead a Career Life-Planning Workshop. We anticipated that this session would lead individuals to explore and make explicit their purposes for joining the MAPOD programme and provide them with the opportunity to reflect upon their career development and life plans. In addition, we hoped it would provide a vehicle for engaging with the first assignment, which would be determined by each student as perceived relevant to their experience whilst broadly related to the theme of module.

### *Day One: Getting Started*

The programme began with all members of the tutor team present. After introductions, we pointed to individual statements about our values and beliefs that we had posted on the walls. These were to be the focus of the evening session, when everyone would be asked to share and reflect on their values and beliefs about learning. To tease out student beliefs we had set aside time in the afternoon to engage in a reflective exercise at the individual and group level, asking the question “How do I learn best?”. We were curious as to what expectations students had about the learning relationship, and what these expectations might mean for developing a learning culture based on student autonomy and self-direction on MAPOD.

In the course of the day we had also posted ‘offers and wants’. These were workshops to be offered and led either by tutors or students, and expressions of interest that could be responded to during the week.

### *Day Two: Are We Safe?*

Day One had got off to a good start. Day Two was timetabled to deal with enrolment in the morning and a career life-planning workshop in the afternoon. Before the career life-planning workshop began, my co-facilitator introduced the idea of buddies as a learning support strategy and I introduced the concept of co-counselling as another vehicle for providing support. As tutors, we were also applying these strategies to own learning relationships, as well as working with the principles of the 'reflecting team' (Anderson and Goolishian, 1992) to review our practice. In my diploma paper I highlight my intervention as signalling the first signs of anxiety.

"Rather than quell anxiety, the very term co-counselling just seemed to raise fears, and I recall having to smooth over this concern by explaining that we just intended to draw on the general idea rather than suggest that people could be fully fledged co-counsellors by reading the handout provided. This explanation seemed to be acceptable and by the tea break the workshop appeared to be running smoothly" (Hartog, 1997).

### *How do I understand my practice – what is going on here?*

I want to stop for a moment just to reflect on the above. Whilst I am aware of a degree of anxiety emerging, I observe that my strategy attempts to dissipate it by 'smoothing it over'. My focus of attention seems to be on moving the programme forward to begin the career life-planning workshop, rather than exploring the underlying current of anxiety in the emergent process. I now wonder if in my desire to avoid a 'derailment' of the programme I was unaware of my own anxieties?

After tea, my colleague begins the career life-planning workshop. She had made it clear to me that when she was leading a session 'she was in charge'. She had said that she did not want any 'chipping in' or 'interference' by any member of the team. Though I was uncomfortable with her style, because it did not fit with

my approach to co-facilitating, I decided to let it go, as I imagined that she might be feeling undervalued as she was not going to be one of the action learning set tutors and by taking the lead on this workshop she could demonstrate to the students that she had a lot to offer. Meanwhile, I sorted out some photocopying, agreeing to return at the next break.

When I got back there appeared to be ‘a storm brewing’. My colleague was in the process of breaking the group into pairs to go off and work on past life-lines. Two people had already left the room and the others were getting up out of their seats when one student announced that she was uneasy about proceeding, because in her experience this type of exercise could be dangerous and should be given a health warning. This announcement served to stop the workshop in its tracks. The group agreed to discuss this. I describe what happened next and my feelings in my diploma paper in the following way:

“My colleague sat calmly listening to the feedback and I sat on the edge of my seat. I don’t know who it was, but someone suggested I should go and get the two people who had already left the room to give them the opportunity to join in. I remember the bemused look on the faces of the two men when I told them that there was some concern and an eagerness to talk about this exercise. Their response suggested that they had not anticipated any danger. They were just beginning to share their life stories. Back in the room the atmosphere was sombre. I sensed a collective unease at the situation. Two things were running through my mind. The first was that we would lose the confidence of the students if we did not handle this. The second was a sense of *déjà vu*, having witnessed a similar scenario running the same workshop with another group. I knew that my colleague would remain calm and listen to the feedback and be responsive to the issues and questions raised. She flagged up the matter of personal and collective responsibility for one’s learning and reminded everyone that no-one was being forced to do anything that they did not want to do” (Hartog, 1997).

My feelings at the time were that my colleague and I needed to ‘take on board’ the anxiety being expressed, and show in our behaviour more sensitivity and awareness toward the possible anxiety or distress that the exercise might bring

forth. It seemed that what students wanted was reassurance that tutors would be there to listen or counsel them if they got stuck or needed support whilst doing this work. The public airing of their anxiety cleared the air, and after a few tense moments, some tears and reassurance of tutor availability, some of the students got up and went on to work with the exercise whilst others sat together to review the process itself.

*How do I understand my practice – what is going on here?*

In my diploma transfer paper I suggest that:

- “I didn’t know what to do with myself.”
- “I felt defensive for the consequences of the programme.”
- “I was relieved that the angst was directed at some-one else rather than me.”
- “That my loyalty was to my colleague rather than the students.”
- “That I like them was struggling to make sense of what was going on.”

*Why was there so much apparent anxiety and where did it come from?*

By the time of writing my diploma transfer paper in May 1997, I realised that anxiety in the process of personal inquiry often came from the baggage that each of us carry with us about our personal life histories. This belief was based on my own experience of working with life history material and feedback given in student assignments at the end of year one, in the reflective essays. This is a view shared by Reason and Marshall (1987). It was an awareness of the potential for distress felt by the student who spoke up and recognised by others which generated resistance to engage with the career life-planning exercise. It was very early in the programme (Day Two). The students had not had much time to form a working alliance with one-another, or to develop relationships that were

sufficiently intimate and supportive to warrant the trust and confidence in each other that they anticipated they might need. Perhaps, more importantly, we had not established a safe enough environment for this kind of learning. Were we expecting too much too soon? We were not unaware that to begin a programme with 'individual (personal) learning' was potentially problematic and that the self-reflective process meant there was less opportunity to hide behind the comfort of content associated with more traditional programmes. We had, however, made our rationale explicit at interview and in the handbook stating that "in order to facilitate the learning of others we believed that first we must pay attention to our own learning process". I also felt that this was a 'chicken and egg' dilemma.

Looking back at my reactions to the emergent anxiety, did I need to act on my gut instincts and challenge my colleague? In other words, did I let her 'position' that she was 'in charge' get in the way of me doing my job and of developing with her an effective co-tutor working alliance? On the other hand, I wondered if I was too willing to take on the responsibility of holding or containing the anxiety attached to this session? I note that my language at the time of reflecting on this event in my diploma transfer paper was that "my colleague and I needed to *take on board* the anxiety being expressed" (Hartog, 1997). Was this the most appropriate response to student needs or was I responding to an inappropriate projection of authority reinforcing the parent/child relationship in the teaching and learning alliance? Certainly, I felt at the time that it might be and like my colleague I believed that students needed to play their part and take responsibility for their learning.

### *Day Three*

The situation seemed to settle down on Day Three. I had not been privy to the informal reflections held over dinner or in the bar on the previous evening. I was

aware that my co-facilitator had spoken with several students individually, but I was not given any detail about these conversations; rather I was told that things had been worked through. A number of student-led sessions were offered on Day Three, including one that asked the question “How do we make learning safe?”. It seemed that at least one student was taking responsibility for her learning and the learning of others seriously in framing this question and facilitating a learning event around it.

#### *Day Four*

On Day Four we continued to work with a variety of sessions being offered by students and tutors. The afternoon was set aside to focus on action learning, starting with a lecture presentation on its underpinning theory and philosophy, which I would lead. This was to be followed by ‘set formation’. As action was the principal learning strategy for managing assignments, this had been timetabled as a key session during the block.

It was 3:45 pm and I was getting ready to begin my presentation, adjusting the overhead projector and sorting out my slides in response to the issues and questions that I had heard being raised earlier in the day and throughout the week. Everyone else was having a tea break, including my co-facilitator and the other two core tutors who would facilitate the action learning sets. I was unaware that they had retired to a syndicate room and were engaged in a discussion to scrap the presentation and go straight into set formation in order that sets be formed before dinner that evening. The rationale for this was to contain any outbreak of anxiety if the set formation was not resolved. A colleague was dispatched to fetch me.

When my colleague informed me that we were having a staff meeting and that I should come I resisted, as the session was due to begin in less than a minute. But

she grabbed me by the hand and dragging me out of the room, repeating “We are having a staff meeting now!”. Once in the syndicate room she started to explain, but was cut off by my co-facilitator who said “ I move we scrap the lecture and go straight for set formation”. “But - but” I replied, trying to get a word in edgeways, “It is precisely because they want to know the theory behind our philosophy and learning design that we are running late.” My co-facilitator was not listening to me and I was annoyed with my other colleagues for not holding the process. Words were exchanged and in the event a colleague suggested a compromise, limiting the presentation to a few key points and the discussion to a fixed timeframe, leaving the remainder of the time before dinner to set formation. With agreement on this strategy I returned to the room to lead the session, the students seemingly unaware of what had just occurred between the tutor team.

*How do I understand my practice- what is going on here?*

What does this tell us about the working alliance within the staff team? This scenario would seem to have marked a turning point or breakdown in the working alliance with my co-facilitator, who I experienced as not co-facilitating or listening. My reading of what the students were asking for at that moment was being ignored. Though her proposal to complete the task of set formation before dinner made sense, what I found problematic was the manner in which the decision was taken. However, I wondered what was driving her motivation to action? Was it what might be good for the students or was it her anxiety to stay in control of the process? As a tutor team we espoused modelling the process. Dialogic process involves listening, reflecting and paying attention to our own process. But this did not reflect the reality of our practice.

Following the presentation, the students formed into three groups and informed the tutors that they wished to interview the three core tutors who would facilitate

the action learning sets, their aim being to select the tutor they felt most appropriate to work with them. Each group met and drew up criteria for selection, which they did not share with us, and then proceeded to interview us. Whilst the students deliberated, the three core tutors exchanged notes on the questions asked and impressions formed of the interview experience. We could not fathom the logic of some of the questions and we were puzzled and bemused by the process. It emerged that we had all formed a preference for one particular set and shared some concerns about another. Our impressions were based on how challenging or otherwise we anticipated the sets to be, the general consensus being that the more challenging the set, the more potentially satisfying for us. As we did not wish to undermine the confidence of students we had expressed concerns about, we decided to say nothing about our impressions. In the event, I got the set that everyone shared a preference for.

### *Day Five*

The end of the first week moved to a close. On Friday morning I facilitated a process review and dialogue that revisited some of the anxiety that had been attached to the career life-planning workshop earlier in the week. Using a technique of circular questioning, I drew out a multiplicity of perspectives from the group. This was deemed helpful in processing ‘unfinished business’, helping everyone to understand what had happened. The final session to evaluate the week also proved positive, declaring the week to be a success.

Once the students had gone the tutor team stayed on to review the week from our perspective. We employed the use of a talking stick.<sup>69</sup> In my diploma transfer paper I noted “a sense of exhaustion and quietness in the team”, nonetheless, we talked for three hours. We talked about where we thought the students had got to

---

<sup>69</sup> Which gives one person the floor at a time and demands that the others listen.



and how autonomous we perceived them to be as learners, and what our expectations were for the future. We also used the time to build some bridges between us, attending to the rift we had experienced the day before. However, I sensed we parted with unfinished business around the nature of our working alliance.

*How do I understand my practice, what is going on here?*

Although able to reflect on the progress of the students, as a tutor team we were less able to step back and reflect on our own processes, both collective and personal. Vince (1996:111) identifies a lack of analysis in the field of experiential management education of the social and political context of that experience, and notes a difficulty in working with and managing emotions involved in learning and change. We had espoused the belief that tutors are learners too. To what extent this was true was debatable. I experienced a tension in the tutor team between rhetoric and reality, in that we lacked the necessary reflection on our actions and missed the opportunity of learning from our experience.

However, our ideal was to promote a community of learners, students and tutors in which no one party could hold authority or claim unconditional expertise over the other. Vince tells us:

“The need to feel competent, consistent, in control and comfortable for ourselves and with others sets a boundary around our capacity to learn and change. This boundary is a protection against anxiety and uncertainty, a protection against the unfamiliar” (1996:113).

Anxiety had played a part in shaping the events of Day Two around the career life-planning exercise and on Day Four prior to set formation. I would suggest that the underlying theme of control was what was at issue here. Vince suggests

that “Anxiety can be seen as a starting point of individual and group defenses against learning and change” (1996:114). Powerful emotions can consciously or otherwise promote or discourage learning and change. What I am suggesting here is that anxiety was a barrier to reflection, learning and change for the tutor team, paradoxically contradicting our espoused learning beliefs. Unable to reflect on our own process we were, I suggested, blinded by our anxieties. Vince further suggests “that experience is conditioned by, and an exercise of power” (1996:115). Was our inability to reflect on our experience symptomatic of the paradox we found ourselves in, simultaneously embarking on a power-sharing process of education with students, whilst retaining a degree of power over them, both in terms of our authority as tutors and for the overarching design for learning?

Revisiting my written accounts of the first year of the MAPOD programme, the issue of control features again and again. Were some of the tutor-led offers (whilst offered with enthusiasm and espoused usefulness) more concerned to satisfy individual egos rather than meet student needs? Were we more content, rather than process driven, than we realised? There was a living contradiction between what Freire (1972) describes as the ‘banking model of education’ in which tutors deposit knowledge into the heads of the students, which was taking place in the workshops under the guise of some tutor-led offers, and what he describes as ‘the problem posing model’ that we were working with in the action learning sets. Describing these two approaches to learning, Vince says:

“The banking model relies on the individual authority of the teacher and the individual passivity of the student. To maintain this relationship, power must be excluded as an issue within learning. In the problem-posing model, experiential learning is not about an individualised experience. Rather, it concerns related experience, involving the individual, the group and the system. Power is thereby acknowledged as an ever-present and dynamic force, helping to define and redefine the experience of learning” (1996:116).

The contradictions did not stop there. A significant difference that emerged between the core tutors was the degree to which they would allow the students to write in the first person. From my perspective, I could not conceive of writing about personal learning using the third person, i.e. 'the author'. Neither did I accept the argument made by a colleague that "inappropriate use of the I would be regarded as un-academic". As far as I was concerned the third person convention in academic writing was the product of a belief in objectivity of rational scientific thinking that was out of place in the context of the MAPOD programme.

In this regard, I experienced a profound denial of my values in practice. These differences were reflected in the learning relationships the three core tutors had with their action learning sets. My students, for example, were particularly assertive in exercising their 'right' to write in the first person. In the face of this resistance, like hooks (1991:153), I took up a place in the 'margins' as a site of oppositional resistance to the felt denial of my values. I would suggest that the resistance of my colleague in disallowing students to write in the first person was a reflection of his anxiety and fears about whether he would be regarded as having let academic standards slip. He was concerned about how he was seen by those in power, which I suggest may help to explain why he could not conceive of challenging this convention. Although I was the programme leader, his academic status was known to be senior to mine and I began to wonder if his status reflected the 'reality' of power situated in the organisation. Whilst this issue had been the source of much anxiety amongst the tutors and students, it did not arise as an issue at the examination board and thus the ensuing controversy that had been anticipated did not happen.

## **Story 2: The Second Time Around**

Several changes took place before the second cohort began. The two tutors who had not facilitated an action learning set withdrew and my colleague who had been resistant to allowing students to write in the first person decided at this stage not to take on the work of another cohort. A new member of staff, experienced in counselling psychology, joined the team. It was agreed that she and the other action learning set tutor would work with the next cohort. As part of her induction, it was agreed that I would work with them during the first module and support her in facilitating the work of an action learning set for the first assignment, as she had no experience of facilitating this type of learning group.

We met as a new team sharing with our new colleague our experience of the first week with cohort one. This time we determined to do more with less and make the timetable more flexible and responsive to student needs and readiness to learn. Next we reflected on how we would work to create a safe space for learning (our primary goal for this learning event) and help students meet each other first as people, rather than as organisational positions and roles. Comments in student feedback from Cohort One such as “I can’t talk to him, he’s an oil executive” led us to find a way forward that would circumvent this fantasy that had served to create barriers to the formation of learning relationships between participants on the first cohort. Then we considered how we would begin the module. We tested out with each other several icebreakers but none seemed to appeal. As we grappled with our goal to create a safe space for learning and find a suitable icebreaker, I suggested that we might share this process with the students, inviting them to help us find a way forward. My colleagues were enthusiastic. One suggested that we should ask the students what they would do and how they would do it. With this initial preparation we began the first session

of MAPOD 2 using Torbert's (1991) inquiry tool (frame, illustrate, advocate and inquire) to facilitate this process.

### *Day One*

We began by asking the students if they would help us start the process in a way that would help to create a safe space. I suggested they might like to discuss in groups of three and I asked each group if they might come up with an icebreaker that they personally felt comfortable with. As the tutor team were working together for the first time we also worked on this task. At the end of the exercise each group fed back their inquiry process and the icebreakers that were offered were scheduled to begin each morning during the block week.

The next session began with an exercise called "What's in a name?". This involved each person telling a story about how they got their name. Everyone had a story to tell, some were light-hearted and some heartbreaking. The exercise, though simple, had begun to lay the foundations for an emotional climate conducive to the creation of a safe space for learning.

At the evening review the tutor team wondered how we might build on this theme of story telling. Although we were taking the lead, facilitating the direction of learning, we were now explicitly working with the learning process with the intention of community building, as opposed to filling the space with content. We were beginning to learn how to address learning as a consultative process and this felt good.

### *Day Two*

The following morning the tutor team shared our reflections with the students. I began by telling a story about my experience of writing my life story as part of

my own inquiry at the University of Bath. I shared with the students the theoretical references I had used that legitimated the use of life story work in the academic context, and I shared with them some aspects of the process, such as the power of naming and speaking about undiscussibles on the page. I did not feel it was appropriate to tell them the details of my life story - that did not seem to be appropriate, but sharing the process did. Additionally, I shared with them my writing process, using Goldberg's (1986) exercise of 'writing down the bones', in which you keep the pen on the page and continue writing out the words, without censorship and as they come for a period of 45 minutes. This process was offered as an alternative to the career life-planning workshop that we had run the previous year. This was taken up by several students, and those who felt they were not ready to work in this way worked together with our new colleague in a small group exploring their own issues and preferences for engaging with the work of individual - personal and professional learning.

### *Days Three to Five*

Day Three consisted of a variety of offer sessions and continued dialogue in the large group. On Day Four, much attention was given to the formation of action learning sets and drawing up criteria that the groups would work with in the production of their assignments. Day Five was taken up with feedback and evaluation. This was very positive. There had been no anxiety of the kind that had attached itself to the programme in the previous year. All in all, it felt a very powerful beginning.

### *How do I understand my practice?*

The second time around I was working with my experience and inquiring of it both with my colleagues and with our new cohort of students. I was clear about what the primary goal was for this learning event. My focus from the outset was

to lay a solid foundation for the creation of a safe space for learning. In sharing my experience of writing my life story, I had experienced myself in the learning relationship as being authentic. I had demonstrated that I was prepared to trust the students in sharing and containing this story. This was, I suggest, significant in moving towards my primary goal. I shared my story not as a teacher talking to a group of students, but as one human being to another. Working in this way, the learning experience felt more powerful than it had when working with the career life-planning exercise the year before.

As a tutor team we were more skilful in our reflective capacity and with the learning process than had been the case previously. We were, I suggest, using our reflective process in the service of strategic planning and action. We were testing out our ideas with each other and the students before we acted on them. This approach is one way, I suggest, of how reflection can become living inquiry. I had shared with my colleagues that the quality of reflection we were engaging in as a tutor team was of the kind that I had hoped we might have engaged in previously. Quite spontaneously, our new colleague replied: “We are the reflecting team”. I had not used this phrase to her before.

Anderson and Goolishian (1992) suggest that the primary purpose of a reflecting team is to generate more ideas that can help the clients consider their position, by way of increasing the range of perspectives open to them. Furthermore, they suggest that the conversation of a reflecting team is a linguistic event in which new meanings are continually evolving toward the dissolution of problems.

Discussing the different use of reflecting teams, Reed (1993:216) describes the work of White (1991) who draws on Foucault to describe how systems of knowledge are inseparable from power relationships. White asks his reflecting team to explain their feedback in the context of their own experiences and intentions, the aim being to deconstruct their professional power in a way that

their knowledge making becomes more transparent to their clients. This, I believe, is what we did. Though our primary objective was to facilitate the learning relationship at the human level, our strategy was also contributing to the construction of power relationships with our students rather than over them. This was a significant turn in our practice from the previous year.

Through a process of reflection and dialogue with colleagues, I had come to better understand my practice and find a way forward to improve it, a process resulting in a 'learning conversation'. Anderson and Swim describe this process:

“Learning, then, is the generation of new knowledge through conversation. By conversation, we mean a generative conversation, a dialogue in which there is a ‘talking with’, a co-exploration that leads to the co-development of alternative views, new learning, and solutions”(1993:146).

Citing Habermas, they describe conversation and dialogue as a form of “communicative action”. In using the reflecting team, learning can emerge as a collaborative conversation, highlighting the importance of dialogue in the creation of a learning community.

### **Story 3: Who Is Spartacus?**

#### *Introduction*

I had a dream of creating a liberating and educative space for my students, a learning community working alongside a reflecting tutor team. At the end of the first week of the second cohort, one of the students shared a poem called *Ithaka* by Constantine Cavafy with the group. Let me take a moment to share with you the words of the first verse:

“As you set out for Ithaka  
Hope your road is a long one,  
Full of adventure, full of discovery



Laistrygonions, Cyclops,  
Angry Poseidon – don't be afraid of them:  
As long as you keep your thoughts raised high,  
As long as rare excitement fills your body  
Laistrygonions, Cyclops,  
Wild Poseidon – you won't encounter them  
Unless you bring them inside you soul,  
Unless your soul sets them up in front of you.”

This poem was to become a touchstone for MAPOD 2 and for me. It was to prove a source of sustenance in what was to become an unexpected period of difficulty for me in this inquiry in respect of my relationships with the students and tutors working with this cohort. From the adventure and discovery experienced working with this cohort in the first week, I was to encounter Laistrygonions, Cyclops and Wild Poseidon in my subsequent learning relationship with them.

Let me explain. The plan was that I would withdraw from the core tutor role following the first module and work with the tutor team during the workshops as and when it was felt I could contribute.<sup>70</sup>

As programme leader, I saw my role as providing a link between the cohorts and the wider academy and, in particular, a link with the external examiner. When the work of the first cohort went to the examination board, I passed on the general feedback to the students and tutors in the second cohort, so that they might be aware of it in the context of writing their assignments. A comment made by the external examiner suggested that we needed to be cautious about revealing personal issues in our writing in case they became a source of voyeurism. MAPOD 2 reacted badly to this feedback, suggesting that it undermined the control they believed they should have over their learning. They further suggested that their assignments should be confidential and challenged

---

<sup>70</sup> I was still working with my action learning set in Cohort 1, now in their second year of the course and recruiting for MAPOD 3.

the right of the examination board to review or pass judgment on their work. What I had not appreciated was how oppositional this group was becoming in relation to the conventions of the academy. They had defined themselves as ‘us’ and the academy as ‘them’.

Unbeknown to me, I too was cast as part of the opposition. I was told by my new colleague that I should only come to the workshops on a prearranged basis, and this was to fulfil my administrative function of course leadership, and she informed me that I was not welcome to pop in for lunch ‘to see how things were going’ as this was in her view disruptive to the group process, which she was now holding. Consequently, I was allocated an hour at the following block to fulfil administrative matters. The warmth and the sense of learning relationship that I had experienced with this group during their first week had evaporated. The culture that this group had evolved was now firmly closed to outsiders, unless invited ‘in’ by the group. I now experienced myself as an unwelcome outsider. After this reception I did not go back. Things came to a head in the second year.

### *The critical incident*

A portfolio of work had been completed during the ‘options’ module and, on behalf of the students, the tutors proposed to submit it to the external examiner. The portfolio represented a collective effort. However, the expectation based on the work submitted by the previous cohort was that the students would provide individual reflective pieces of work. The contributions in the MAPOD 2 portfolio were anonymous. The tutors argued that the collective effort was in keeping with the learning experience of the group, whereas I believed that anonymity would be problematic and lead to difficulties at the examination board. I anticipated that the external examiners would be unhappy if it could not be shown that each student in the cohort had equally contributed to the work in

this portfolio. Additionally, the portfolio was handwritten, making it difficult to read and follow. I pointed this out to the tutors.

Since this was a practical module and the examiner had not asked to see the reflective accounts of the students in the previous cohort, I advised my colleagues against sending her the portfolio and suggested that instead they give her an account of what they had done during the residential workshop. But the tutors decided to ignore my advice and sent it anyway.

The decision to present the portfolio anonymously had been taken by the students to symbolise and represent their union as a true 'learning community'. The tutors understood this and supported their decision. They appeared keen to 'show off' their achievements to the external examiner. They could not see that others might not appreciate it in the way they did.

In the event, the external examiner asked the question that I anticipated: "Will the university allow you to break the rules like this?". Had they prepared themselves for this perspective they might have been able to articulate their case, and furthermore they might have questioned the interpretation of the rules.

As course leader, I experienced this moment in the examination board as nothing short of an own goal. I was annoyed with the tutors and it showed. I felt that they had behaved irresponsibly, putting the external examiner in a difficult and contentious position, with potentially dire consequences for the programme as a whole. They, on the other hand, were furious with me for not defending them, and for challenging their integrity when they felt they were acting in the 'developmental' interests of 'the learning community'.

Following this public debacle, we were called to account. As course leader, I received communication from the chair of the examination board that a post-

mortem would be held. I then wrote to my colleagues in my role as course leader, calling them to account for themselves, posing the following questions:

1. What authority did you exercise to ensure that the assessment requirements for the module were met?
2. Did you make clear to the students what the expectations/requirements for assessment were, as per the LUN.<sup>71</sup>
3. What role did the tutors play in the assessment of this work?
4. What form did the assessment take and where is the evidence for this?
5. What criteria were used to assess this work?
6. What was the tutor role in assessing it and using it in the assessment process?

In their response, they emphasised that the students had sought to show how individual and organisational learning had become one. Cautioning me on any unravelling, I was asked by one of my colleagues:

“...Do you remember the film ‘Spartacus’ when the slaves were asked to reveal their leader and each says ‘I am Spartacus’ – that’s what I feel the Options Module portfolio was trying to convey” (Memo of 24 June 1998).

This colleague sets out a re-evaluation of his relationship with ‘me, us and them, to him’, in which he states his intention to withdraw from the core tutor team. He says that he is “deeply hurt” by my comments and takes the inference that he may have brought the course and group into disrepute personally. In his memo, he makes a point of shifting his response to me - from Mary the colleague, to Mary the programme leader. He further suggests that part of his rationale is fuelled by a tension between the ‘academic’ and the ‘developmental’, quoting at

---

<sup>71</sup> LUNs are ‘learning unit narratives’ - a statement of the teaching, learning and assessment strategy for the module.

length from the portfolio in support of this assertion, concluding with the following quotation from one of the students:

“Of interest is the ongoing tension between MA (POD) and the established academic perspective. MA (POD) is on the edge of learning, providing a real platform from which to spring into the future. The question, I believe, is about how MA (POD) can remain on the edge, in order to facilitate the challenge of learning while also bringing the benefits of the approach of the other Masters programmes which currently offer greater predictability, tighter framework and specific outcomes without the energy, confidence, excitement to make change happen for the organisations of the future. To do this without losing the vibrancy and opportunities that MA (POD) offers is the challenge for the university and academia generally” (personal communication from MAPOD student, 1998).

In setting out his case he says:

“I have tried to make transparent dilemmas that I have which I also see/reflected amongst students [names supplied]. I have written out this account to try and put on the record why I believe the portfolio that resulted from this options module was a legitimate expression of the group’s level of learning at the end of POD which was ‘acknowledged’ and recognised by us all. If you look at each assignment you will see emerging from individual pieces of works the same strands as apparent in the community weave. ‘Weaving’ has been a key symbol for POD2 – one of the group describes what they have achieved ‘as a rich web of interconnectivity’. If you choose to unravel the web, so be it” (Memo of 24 June 1998).

### **How do I Understand my Practice?**

In my M.Phil. transfer paper,<sup>72</sup> as I reflected on this event, I noted that I experienced myself for the first time as a ‘living contradiction’ on the MAPOD programme. On the one hand, I wanted to create a learning community, and on the other I had been unable to sustain the kind of learning relationships necessary to keep a dialogue going between my colleagues, the students and the academy. Experiencing myself in this way led me to reflect more deeply on this issue. In

---

<sup>72</sup> Written in September 2000. See Hartog (2000b).

my M.Phil. transfer paper I described how I used this memo from my colleague to further my inquiry, composing a letter to him in my journal as though it were a reply, in order that I could reflect and better understand what had happened in our relationship.

### *My reflective process*

I describe how “I feel his hurt and acknowledge that he feels deeply let down by me” and I ask myself “Why do things get in a muddle?”. Could one of the problems have been that I was too busy being the manager in my learning relationships with these colleagues, rather than inquiring into my practice and our learning relationship? Looking back at my journal entry of 25 June 1998, I note that I resolve to construct my reply with compassion and write:

“I would hope that I can show you that even though I am not supporting you on this one, I am not standing against you either! I would hope to show you that I have consistently tried to stand by you (not by-stand, although, clearly you think I was by-standing when I didn’t stop you sending the portfolio to the external) and I continue to do so, even though it may feel very uncomfortable for you and difficult for you to see at the moment”.

I tried to imagine the difficulty he may have experienced getting the students to listen to any request to respond to the requirements of the academy, and I imagine that under such pressure a compromise in the form of the collective portfolio was reached. I write:

“Your reference to Spartacus suggests that you really do believe that the academy seeks to enslave them [the students, as learners] and with that in mind I can see how you could only support them and as the ‘dutiful parent’ taking steps to protect your ‘offspring’ [the students had likened their group to the Walton’s a television family, where the two tutors were the ‘parents’ and I was cast as ‘the grandmother’]. I want to acknowledge your loyalty to this group, which remains steadfast in the face of external threats”.

By contrast I imagined that I was perceived to be disloyal both to my colleague and the student group. In the following pages of my journal I grappled with the question “Why have the students set themselves up in opposition to the academy?”. Could it not have been possible to come up with a creative solution that satisfied the needs of ‘them’ (the academy) and ‘us’ (the MAPOD 2-group)?

I am particularly puzzled by their oppositional stance that infers an ‘either/or’ relationship, since I had introduced the concept of systemic thinking to this group and I knew they were familiar with the use of the ‘both and’ position.

Feeling irritated by the pluralistic position that has been adopted, my empathy wanes and I slip back into my role as manager and adopt the voice of the ‘critical parent’, ticking them off for placing themselves and the students at risk and in so doing, failing in their responsibilities to the academy. I say that I am trying to hold my neutrality - trying to understand what has happened and to stand by them in the face of a backlash, but I claim a responsibility to other stakeholders, particularly the MAPOD 3 students who had just begun and future cohorts, as well as a responsibility to take on board the what the external examiner had said.

*What is going on here?*

This reflective inquiry is difficult as I experience myself in different roles, speaking first as colleague then as a manager. The different nature of these relationships and the power in the latter make the inquiry process more complex.

Vince and Martin (1993) argue that it is relevant to see social power relations as ‘political’ at both the individual and institutional level. They point out that people are positioned unequally in their relationships and that the relationship between power and process constantly shapes the agendas and practice of learning groups. Furthermore, they point out that if these power relationships are

not acknowledged, they are often 'acted out' in the form of fear, hatred and contempt. I wondered if the injunction to keep me on the outside of MAPOD 2 had more to do with the relationship between my new colleague and the students in terms of her needs and anxiety concerning the establishment of her authority and expertise than the management of process *per se*. By contrast, it was suggested that I had acted not to defend them precisely because I was jealous of their success with this cohort.

I wondered too if the story which I had created of MAPOD as an alternative site for learning had taken on a life of its own? Had the tutors gone 'native' as they worked with this cohort, feeding the message of opposition and challenge to the academy back to me? It certainly seemed possible.

If the portfolio and the subsequent 'ballyhoo' that followed was fuelled by an underlying cycle of emotions and anxieties around these issues, was this anxiety being denied and displaced as a defensive routine presented as 'fight' or form of resistance to the academy? Whilst the tutors had facilitated the students to speak with one voice, was there another level at which their learning relationship fostered a cycle of emotions that discouraged learning? In an effort to celebrate their achievements and challenge the conventions of the academy in the presentation of an anonymous portfolio, were they not in danger of creating an unnecessary risk to the very autonomy that they craved?

At the post-mortem, the discourse between the MAPOD tutors was adversarial. It was easier to blame one-another for the fallout rather than listen. I, no more than anyone else, seemed able to practice what I preach. The group professor chairing this meeting said "It is clear that valuable creative work is going on in the student group but not in the tutor group". I sensed that I had denied my educational values in practice and I knew myself as 'a living contradiction' (Whitehead, 1993).



### *Finding a way forward*

The fallout from this critical incident left me feeling at an all time low. This forced me to confront the question: “How do I live my values more fully in my practice?”

The final verse of the poem, *Ithaka*, reinforces the importance of ‘the journey’, giving me the courage and emotional succour to pick myself up by my bootstraps and continue the journey of my inquiry.

“Keep Ithaka always in your mind.  
Arriving there is what you are destined for.  
But don’t hurry the journey at all.  
Better if it lasts for years,  
So you are old by the time you reach the island,  
Wealthy with all you’ve gained on the way,  
Not expecting Ithaka to make you rich.  
Ithaka gave you the marvellous journey.  
Without her you wouldn’t have set out  
She has nothing left to give you now.

And if you find her poor, Ithaka won’t have fooled you.  
Wise as you will have become, so full of experience,  
You’ll have understood by then what these Ithakans mean.”

Constantine Cavafy

So distraught was I at failing to live my values in my practice, I comforted myself with the thought that “as long as I could hold my thoughts high” I could resolve my failings as a ‘living contradiction’. I was becoming full of experience, though I felt far from being wise. As the poem suggests, it is better if the journey lasts for years. I realised that my inquiry as an educational practitioner had barely begun. In my M.Phil. transfer paper, I wrote that my belief in the journey would make me wise and provide me with a form of comfort at this time of intense emotional perturbation in my inquiry.

### *The challenge*

As I tried to come to terms with the implications of placing my 'I' at the centre of my inquiry, I had to grapple with my instinct to respond to dilemmas in a classic Catholic manner. It was easy to move into the *mia culpa* mode, beat my breast and take on blame as well as responsibility when I experienced contradictions between my espoused values and practice. This instinctive guilt-ridden approach is assuaged by the confessional nature of writing one's 'I' into accounts of my inquiry. In reflecting on my own process, I had to take a more critical eye to my own assessment and try to tease out more carefully what I could reasonably expect to address and improve, and what I could not change or influence. Understanding the underlying process of anxiety was an important part of this process and coming to terms with the limitations of my own and my colleagues' capacity to be reflective in the midst of our own process was another.

The displacement of anxiety between the tutors was similar to the 'parallel process' (Kaberry, 2000) taking place between the MAPOD 2 tutors and the student group. As Kaberry points out, "This is likely to concern issues which involve conflict and anxiety and as such remains unconscious" (2000:58).

The question "who manages your practice?" was put to me by both students from my first action learning set and my new colleague, whose background was in counselling psychology. So would a supervisory reflective relationship of this kind have been a useful aid to my practice?

In the field of counselling and psychotherapy, this kind of reflective practice is managed by supervision, by an expert and experienced fellow professional. Clinical supervision, as it is known, is not common to the field of management education. Though it is now a compulsory part of the British Association for Counselling's *Code of Ethics for Practice* and seen as good practice for the

ongoing development of the skills, awareness and knowledge of practitioners, there is, according to Feltham (2000), no hard evidence to attest to its efficacy in making a difference to the experience and work of the client (who is after all, always present in the centre of the supervisory relationship). This is despite the potential benefits that supervision may offer the professional practitioner in respect of off-loading anxiety and stress. Supervision is intended to address the professional development of the practitioner, not his or her inner affective world.

Though supervision, along with personal therapy, is standard practice for those counselling practitioners working from a psychoanalytic perspective, there is according to Feltham (ibid.) a conflict between an ethic based on faith and one based on empiricism. In the field of systemic family therapy (in which I had some training), personal therapy is not conditional. Rather the process of this approach is itself highly reflexive and the role of 'the reflecting team' that I introduced to MAPOD has the specific task of generating a range of perspectives and insights to facilitate the understanding of both the practitioner and the client. The culture in higher education would, I suggest, not be receptive to the model of supervision unless it were disassociated from personal therapy; whereas I believe it would be more receptive to the systemic approach, which has been developed and employed to facilitate the organisational and consulting contexts, and the reason why I promoted this approach on the MAPOD programme. Our failure to sustain this reflective practice in the tutor team was I believe partly responsible for why things got in such a muddle in the case of MAPOD 2.

### *My zone of attention*

The goals of student autonomy in learning and community building were not questioned at this stage in my inquiry. The latter appeared to be a realistic goal endorsed by students at the recruitment stage and forged in the initial learning contracts that were formed in the sets. Community building was assumed to be a

good thing. What I had discovered from reflecting on my experience with the first cohort and my experience of working with the tutor teams on both cohorts was that community building was complex. It was easy to be fooled into celebrating a superficial community. True community had to be worked at.

Scott Peck (1987:86) offers a four-stage model of community building. The first stage he calls 'psuedo community' and likens the relationships in such a community to a cocktail party. This resonates with the tutor team relationships on MAPOD 1, where we frequently met over lunch and there was initially a lot of bonhomie. The second stage he calls 'chaos'. He argues that it is human nature to want community and that we are driven by our frustrations with the superficial relationships of the cocktail party to search for more meaningful relationships with others. However, in making this move we are unprepared for the differences we discover and finding them difficult to tolerate we lurch into chaos. Because working with the pain involved at this stage is almost unbearable, Scott Peck suggests that most organisations revert back to the cocktail party when the going gets tough. This resonates with my experience of the tutor teams in both cohorts. The third stage toward community building is 'emptiness'. Here, individuals must be willing to put aside their assumptions, to notice and hold them in suspense. It is a place for dialogue, both with others and with the self. It may involve letting go of your position or moving beyond it. 'Community' is the fourth and final stage of Scott Peck's model.

In the early days of MAPOD, the tutor teams were unable to model the practice of community building as we imagined we would, except for a brief moment when we began MAPOD 2. Whilst the cohesiveness of the MAPOD 2 cohort of tutors and students would suggest that they were able to move through these stages more effectively to create a powerful learning community, this was insular and unreflective, resulting in separating the wider academic community.

## Conclusions

Learning to place my 'I' at the centre of my inquiry in the context of educational action research has proved to be the principal vehicle that has helped me learn how to reflect on my practice during the early days of MAPOD, without which I would not have been able to recognise myself as a living contradiction.

This approach to the inquiry and development of my practice has been enhanced by the production of written accounts which, as Lomax (1999) points out, facilitate a 'double dialectic of meaning making', enabling me in the first instance to create meaning for myself, and secondly to share and test out my understanding in the public domain with an audience of critical friends.

As I develop the skills of a reflective practitioner, I have acknowledged in conference papers and in Hartog (2002)<sup>73</sup> my continuing process of development, and my awareness of the importance of ego maturity in developing my capacity to be less ego defensive in the management and containment of my own anxiety. This being key to reflection and the inquiry process.

In this chapter, I have provided an account of my practice during the early years of MAPOD between 1995 and 1998, reviewing my inquiry during the life of the first two MAPOD cohorts. This chapter indicates the challenges I faced in learning to place my 'I' at the centre of inquiry, and through a process of accounting has sought to unravel my reflective process during this period as I ask questions of the kind "How do I understand my practice?" and make sense of it by asking "what is going on here?". I have sought to answer these questions by analysing the stories and critical incidents contained therein, benchmarking them

---

<sup>73</sup> In the article "Becoming a reflective practitioner: a continuing professional development strategy through humanistic action research".

against the educational values and goals espoused for MAPOD. I have also drawn on relevant literature to illuminate my understanding of these events in my inquiry.

## **CHAPTER SEVEN: WORKING WITH MARGARET: HOW DOES MY ‘LIVING THEORY’ CONSTITUTE A DISCIPLINE OF EDUCATIONAL ACTION RESEARCH?**

### **Introduction**

In this chapter I want to share with you my storied account of ‘Working with Margaret’, a student on MAPOD Cohort 4. This chapter draws on my inquiry as I reflect on the nature and development of my teaching and learning relationship with Margaret during the period from 1998 to 2001 when Margaret graduated. This phase of my inquiry marks a shift in my attention from the general to the particular. That is, from the general focus of how to create a learning environment that is supportive of the goals of the programme to the creation of a safe space for learning and the creation of a loving and life affirming relationship with a particular student.

I present three short stories of working with Margaret, based around three assignments where I worked with Margaret as the tutor facilitator of the action learning set that Margaret was in. Each of the three assignments present distinct spirals in a cycle of action research in which I plan to facilitate my students’ learning. The structure of the course enables me to systematically review, reflect and evaluate my practice in line with my espoused professional values and the goals of the programme. This provides for a continuous and iterative process of hypothesising and sense making, facilitating answers to the questions of “What is going on here?” and “How can I improve my practice?”.

One aim of this account is to provide an example of what it has meant for me to work with a student in mid-life transition. In particular, I aim to throw light on the emergent process of a teaching and learning relationship that is concerned with facilitating the process of personal development, as well as the more

traditional academic-supervisory function of professional and organisational research. It charts the emergent history of my inquiry in the learning relationship as I seek to respond to this student's learning and development needs, as she reveals and pursues her quest for the construction of self-identity. Through my descriptions and explanations, I aim to show what it means for a tutor to take the meaning of a life seriously, and what it means to be guided by life issues in the conduct of facilitation of the student's development process.

In constructing this account my aim is to show how my 'living theory' constitutes a discipline of educational action research. The idea of a living theory (Whitehead, 1989) begins with questions such as "How do I improve my practice?". It is principally a reflective question that frames the conduct of my practice, enabling me to test out whether and to what extent I am living out my values in practice. I refer to values such as a claim to care for my students, a respect for the integrity of their tacit knowing, placing value on the experience they bring, and a belief in the emancipatory purpose of the educational endeavour.

Furthermore, I experience myself as a living contradiction "in those moments when I am conscious of holding certain values, whilst at the same time denying them in my practice" (Whitehead, 1999:78). In confronting the truth of my experience, I am both perturbed and motivated to find a way forward to better meet and respond to the needs of my student and to bridge the gap between my values as espoused and lived. My descriptions and explanations are an attempt to capture the dialectical nature of reality as lived and experienced in this teaching and learning relationship. As a self-study of my own practice, I am accepting that my 'I' is both subject and object of this inquiry, and that such an account, though specific to the teaching and learning relationship with one student, can offer resonance and insight to others interested in the formation of a teaching and learning relationship guided by living theory.



The account is substantial as it relies on ‘thick description’ of the learning relationship over a two-year period, described as one which “gives the context of an experience, states the intentions and meanings that organised the experience, and reveals the experience as a process” (Denzin, 1994:505). Furthermore, he suggests that “out of this process arises a text’s claims for truth”. This form of accounting aims to provide descriptions and explanations that are rich in detail and that speak for themselves. However, it should be noted that embodied knowledge cannot be so easily captured in words; their representation as narrative account, no matter how detailed and rich, can never quite capture all the truth of experiencing. It is what Lather (1994) coined ‘ironic validity’.

Therefore, in addition to my reflections on these three occasions of working with Margaret, I will draw on sources of data to illuminate my account. This will include Margaret’s assignments and dissertation, and the feedback given by me. I will also draw on an audiotape of the second assignment, and two videotapes taken during the dissertation period. An extract from one of these videotapes is contained in a CD-R file,<sup>74</sup> offering an image-based representation of a moment in the teaching and learning relationship.

In order to facilitate the reading of this account, following the introduction and background, it is framed in three sections: ‘Assignment One’, ‘Assignment Two’ and ‘Dissertation’, which serve to foreground and differentiate the task context of the teaching and learning relationship. This is followed by a return to the question that frames this chapter: “How does my living theory constitute a discipline of educational action research?” This is followed by a discussion that aims to answer this question and further explain the nature of my living theory

---

<sup>74</sup> See CD-R attached to back board of this thesis binding.

and my engagement with propositional theories (that are internalised) and which together inform and guide my teaching and learning relationship.

### **Background to Working with Margaret and the MAPOD Context**

Margaret was a student on the MAPOD programme and a member of the fourth cohort (MAPOD 4). The MAPOD programme was designed for experienced practitioners working with people and organisations in a learning and development context. Margaret joined the programme as a mature student, a woman in her fifties with a life-time of experience and, as a specialist in the field of technical systems support, working within health care services. Like many mature and experienced practitioners attracted to the MAPOD course, Margaret saw herself moving into a self-employed consulting role and viewed the programme as a vehicle in support of that goal. Whilst Margaret saw her area of expertise giving her a particular foothold into organisation consulting, she was also concerned not just to be seen as “the computer lady” (her words). Margaret saw herself as a ‘people person’, concerned with supporting and improving health care, and she hoped that MAPOD with its emphasis on personal and organisational development might give her a more holistic perspective and legitimacy as a development practitioner and thus widen the scope of her professional identity. For the majority of the MAPOD programme (a part-time two year course), Margaret worked on average three days a week on a project style contract with a major London hospital, in support of clinical audits and excellence with a variety of clinical practitioners and health care teams.

During the programme I had the opportunity to work with Margaret on three occasions in the context of action learning sets. Action learning was one of the main learning strategies employed on MAPOD to facilitate self-directed learning. As such, the students worked upon individual projects on issues of their choice that they deemed relevant to their professional and working lives within the

context and framework of a broad assignment area. They worked with and alongside others in small groups known as action learning sets, the aim of the set being to provide each person with support and challenge in the production of a coherent and critical account. Each set was facilitated by a tutor and met on average three times to plan, work through and assess the assignment(s). The MAPOD programme included a process of self, peer and tutor assessment, which we believed to be an important and enriching extension of the learning process itself, supporting values for the development of 'autonomous learners' whose learning was facilitated by engagement with 'meaningful' assignments. These goals were pursued through the process of critical reflection on action, a sense of responsibility for the learning of self and others, facilitated through the action learning process, through which, learning was situated as a social process. With autonomous learners, we were concerned to support the development of people who could think for themselves. For example, people who could act with conviction and integrity, and were capable of constructing and taking a critical stance, where rhetoric and reality of practice belied truth to power. We believed that the MAPOD process would help students clarify and take up a 'position' guided by a sense of 'purpose' and in relation to their practice, which we saw culminating in the final dissertation.

We also believed that that the focus of the programme needed to incorporate both the personal and the organisational 'context'. In short, we espoused the belief that unless you engaged in development and inquiry as a personal process, you would be less equipped to appreciate and support the learning of others and/or the processes of organisational learning. Thus, the ability to explore one's own learning process and history, and develop a critique of that experience was, we believed, essential to facilitate healthy and learningful practice interventions.

The first two occasions when I worked with Margaret were at the start of MAPOD 4, where Margaret worked on producing first an individual learning

history assignment, and secondly an action research account. The third opportunity came in the second year of the programme, when Margaret opted to work with others in the action learning set that I would facilitate for the production of the dissertation. By this stage I was familiar with Margaret's learning journey, insofar as she had explored issues of voice and subjective knowledge through her own learning history. Subsequently, with the participation of her action learning set, Margaret had initiated and facilitated a collaborative enquiry that sought to reveal issues of authority and power in academic relations.

I was less familiar with what she had been engaged with in her other assignments, though I had some contact with her during the residential block which preceded the production of the 'change agent' assignment, where she had contributed to a workshop on facilitation, drawing on the work of Roger Harrison. I was pleased that Margaret chose to join my action learning set for the dissertation, as I had experienced her as a committed and challenging student. Indeed, this set had formed around a stated desire to engage in a 'deep' learning journey. Biggs (1989) identifies three learning strategies that a student can take, the first a surface strategy, characterised by the strategy of cramming to pass an exam or test, thus committing to short-term memory the essential facts needed to pass which quickly evaporate after they have been regurgitated in the exam; the second, a strategic strategy, where the student identifies what has to be done to get a good enough pass; and the third, a deep learning strategy which engages the student with meaningful learning experiences, which become deeply internalised in the process.

The course began late in the autumn term and many students were keen to graduate in the July of the second year, thus taking approximately eighteen months to complete the programme. The group that formed my action learning set for the dissertation specifically wanted to have the benefit of the full two

years (in common with other MUBS programmes). They felt that by doing so they would purposefully engage in a deep learning process as opposed to a more strategic one. The set described itself as being 'in for the long haul'.

Although some members of the set had worked together before, not all had, and I had worked with some individuals though not everyone. With the exception of two younger practitioners who were at the peak of their early careers and who enjoyed the common experience of getting married for the first time at the end of the first year, the four other set members were coming towards the end of their primary careers, and were variously single, divorced, widowed or with a second partner, and in mid-life transition.

Of the six members of the dissertation set, four completed their dissertations in November 2000, the fifth set member completed in January 2001 and Margaret completed in March of the same year. During the dissertation period Margaret faced bereavement with the loss of her mother and then shortly after, her father. This was to bring to the surface life issues that influenced both the content and process of Margaret's dissertation.

### **Assignment One**

The framework for the first assignment is the theme of individual learning and support strategies. Within this module students often review aspects of their learning history, consider how they learn best, and reflect on their understanding of themselves as learners. Such learning reviews can be situated in the context of formal educational experiences, work or professional life, or contained within autobiographical and life history narratives.

In her assignment dated February 1999, Margaret introduces the reader to her life course, drawing on experiences of the previous year, both professional and

personal. Margaret frames this with the title “Weaving my past into the future”, doing this by ‘telling a story’ of the past year and by charting a life-line of her perceived well-being, in which she notes the highs and lows of the year, guided by events and her gut reactions.

In her introduction, she tells us that she moved into the corporate strategy arena five years ago as an Information Manager, working for an organisation that was fighting for survival, and that by the third year she had begun to physically collapse, was suffering from chronic insomnia, repeated laryngitis, sinusitis and hormone fluctuation. We learn that this period culminates with a broken ankle when she decides to take six weeks unpaid leave to recuperate and go the U.S. for the birth of her grandson.<sup>75</sup> She states three purposes in writing the paper. The first is “to find my own voice”; the second to “use my knowledge to make a difference to other people”; and the third “to share understanding and insights with others”.

We learn that whilst Margaret is away, the letter for outsourcing her department is signed, and on her return Margaret reduces her working hours to three days a week, leaving her with two days which she uses initially to recuperate and achieve physical well-being through attending exercise classes, and for a planned career change of which MAPOD is a part. She states:

“At the outset my objective seemed clear: I was to use the time to carry out the career change which I had been muttering about for years, a move into working freelance with a focus on organisational change rather than merely getting people to use computer systems”.

For Margaret this is a significant life change, as she says “For 25 years I had been driven by the tight structure of commuting and workplace.” This “goal of

---

<sup>75</sup> Margaret is from Virginia in the U.S. and has lived in England for the past eleven years.

professional change” as described by Margaret, is accompanied by the decision to purchase a larger house, which she describes as “the first move” with her (second) husband, big enough to accommodate grandchildren and provide study space.

Margaret describes these life changes as not without difficulty. Her house move experienced as a source of “constant anxiety” and the workplace she describes as “tense”. In the light of the changes taking place there, she says “I hated feeling unwanted and helpless, not in control of my own path”. She describes her colleagues as “beleaguered”, a number of whom were faced with redundancy. “I felt upset and angry along with the whole department at the crude macho antics of the new management and the betrayal of past promises”, and she adds “What a welcome from a new employer”. Both of these events are described as “losses”. Namely, a loss of colleagues whom Margaret describes as “comrades” coupled with a felt sense of “homesickness” for her old home. Additionally, Margaret describes a third loss, one of an opportunity to study at Surrey University, where she experiences a rejection to her application for their Change Agent programme, a rejection based on their judgment that “she was insufficiently developed for the rigours of their course”.

Though clearly painful, this academic rejection causes Margaret to think about what personal development might mean for her. She says:

“The challenges raised in those 45 minutes eventually caused me to decide to cease being a dilettante at personal development, to dig into real development and self change, and to move myself onto an upward spiral instead of an endless loop.”

It is at this point that Margaret seeks voluntary redundancy and accepts the MAPOD course offer. Evaluating these changes as she writes her first assignment, Margaret says:

“with the new year there is a sense of fruition, of balance. I dare not say it aloud for fear it would become undone; life is no longer a nightmare; it is going to be okay. Life is becoming inner directed rather than outer judged.”

In her assignment she describes attending a “Shamanism” weekend, where she learns about “the medicine wheel”, and tells us that she has taken up Tai Chi in order to improve her well-being. We also get a first inkling that Margaret is interested in Celtic rituals, as she mentions celebrating the summer solstice, one of several practices which she names as “spiritual” and which feature later on in her dissertation process. Margaret also describes her experience of the first MAPOD block, contrasting it to the Shamanism weekend.

“It too was an emotional group experience. I experienced ‘ordinary’ British professionals (not strange New Agers) struggling to talk and listen in a real way. This was more than an academic programme.”

Margaret then seeks to “reflect back: drawing out lessons and theories” from her experience. She asks “what do I know?” and tells us that she is “wrestling with theory in general, asking ‘what is it?’ and ‘how can it serve me, not me serve it?’” The following paragraphs are illuminating, as they provide clues to Margaret’s way of knowing and sense of self and mind, at that point in time.

“At this stage of my life at this point in my professional experience, it feels very important to articulate my own conceptual understanding and to construct my own theories. I need to establish for myself an ‘inside-out’ knowledge, a guidance from my own internal concepts and authority. Often this manifests itself as crude rejection of any authority other than myself: I can no longer abide being told what to think and do - a deep midlife rebellion.

The writings of others, especially those presented as authorities, are a particular dilemma for me now. I was a good student, an academic obedient, taking authorities at face value and applying theories literally. During the past five years, I have swung to the opposite extreme of rejecting all received wisdom and adamantly striving to create my own”.



Margaret contrasts the processes' growth, adaptation, change and development, and what surface and deep learning mean to her citing external practices and internal insights, such as knowing "how the world works" and "how I work", and identifying her own framework of knowing as:

- internal and external frames of reference;
- recurring cycles or loops; and
- cycles and spirals.

Furthermore, she identifies as important to her: "self direction, purposes, values and integrity, the spiritual, action and reflection, care of self and energy flow [of which she says] ...my critical resource now is energy not time". From these characteristics, Margaret identifies how she learns best, citing with examples the processes of self-direction, action and struggle, social learning, and in particular, support, reflection and challenge. She further acknowledges the importance of her own state of mind for learning, especially the effect of negative spirals caused by feeling threatened or vulnerable.

Having established her 'inside out' knowing, Margaret offers a brief sketch of the ideas of others that resonate with her, including Belenky *et al.*, Rogers, Scott Peck and Clarkson whose four stage model of moving from "conscious incompetence to conscious competence" she cites as reflective of the personal development process which she has begun by writing this first paper. She concludes by saying:

"The goal is not to become a good learner, nor, indeed to become a good changer. The goal is to live an effective life. But in order to do that one needs to change, and in order to change one needs to be a good learner. That is the reason for learning about learning."

At the end of her assignment, Margaret cites a Buddhist aphorism: “You have come here to find what you already have”.

### **How Do I Respond? (February 1999)**

As I engage with Margaret as a reader of her paper, I am drawn into her metaphorical frame of weaving past and present. I am sensitive to the language she chooses and the meanings that words convey, such as her use of the word “beleaguered” to describe the managers who ran the department for four years, managers she described as “comrades”. I note my response by marking the lines in the margins and writing words of acknowledgement and questions where her comments have stirred my curiosity, so that I will remember to ask her about these things in the action learning set meeting. The word ‘more’ appears against several points where they could be expanded and developed. Through her words, I am stepping into her shoes to get a sense of the context of her experience. I note that I am curious to know more about what ‘spirituality’ means for her, and wonder how Shamanism and Tai Chi play a part. I wonder too, what she thinks is going on in the MAPOD programme, which she described as “more than an academic programme” and I reflect on the emotionality of listening and talking that her words convey. I am also mindful of Harrison’s (1995:33) work and the concepts of the ‘castle’<sup>76</sup> and ‘battlefield’.<sup>77</sup> Harrison believed that both processes (not to be confused with places) were needed for learning. I had been working with these ideas on MAPOD, believing that the MAPOD community might provide a safe haven for the restoration of self, away from the organisational battleground which seems to be characteristic of organisational change, mergers, acquisitions and redundancies.

---

<sup>76</sup> The castle is the experience of having allies, support and where one might hold on to one’s defences and even resist change.

<sup>77</sup> Where people may disagree, where one’s expectations are disconfirmed and where authority figures may behave in unpredictable ways.

During the first block week I introduced to the MAPOD participants the story of the 'Fifth Province' (Stroier, 1993:314). In Irish mythology, the Fifth Province was where ancient kings and chieftains came to meet every other year to talk and find a way forward to hold the peace for the coming years. The rule of engagement was that before they could enter the Fifth Province they must take off their weapons and leave them outside. Only when the gathering was over could they put back on their defensive shields to return to their own lands. This was the ideal space I believed we could create in the MAPOD community, with participants putting their 'armour' back on to return to their workplaces.

I write down Roger Harrison's name in the margin, as a point of reference to pass on to Margaret. Similarly, in response to her rich use of metaphor closely associated with the cycle of the seasons, I scribble "Heron (1992:20)" to remind me to show her his version of the learning hierarchy, where 'imaginal knowing' expresses the tacit knowing of experience through imagery, before the language of conceptual knowing, traditionally associated with academic discourse. I am particularly struck by her questions of knowing, her expressed search for her own emergent theory of learning. The phrases "At this stage in my life" and "I can no longer abide being told what to think and do", and her comments of "being a good student" and "academic obedient" resonate, ringing familiar bells, and lead me to write in the margins "we need to talk about this". Additionally, I write "Belenky *et al.* (1986)", whose work Margaret refers to briefly, and "balance" meaning to suggest that she might aim for a balance in her writing between the subjectivity or experience of one's own knowing and the work of others.

These points punctuate and shape my initial feedback, where I thank her for sharing her story and say "I was drawn into your struggle and felt your pain, full of resonance and connected knowing." I acknowledge her analysis of "finding voice" and the struggle against authority, yet encourage her to engage with and

make more use of Belenky *et al.*'s work, suggesting that she may also be interested to look at Heron and Harrison, and provide her with these references. I am concerned to phrase my feedback with care and to this end I write:

“Appreciating why you have been reluctant to engage with the theories of others, I would now encourage you to engage with and even embrace a number of authors [you have identified] and contrast and critique their work in relation to you own ‘living theory’ and model of learning”.

In framing my feedback in this way, I am not trying to lead Margaret anywhere she herself has not already gone, albeit in some cases somewhat tentatively.

I presented my feedback in the context of the action learning process, where each set member gets an hour to present their paper and personal assessment, and invite feedback and discussion. My feedback seemed to be well received. However, just as we were about to break for coffee, I was asked to give my opinion on the rank order of merit of the various papers presented by the set members. I ranked Margaret's paper behind that of another student, who I suggested had achieved a better balance of theory (scholarship) and practice (experientially based learning). Though intended to be helpful (educative) and explicit about the way I was applying criteria in respect of constructing an academic judgment, I realised that I had unwittingly introduced an element of competition with this comparative rank ordering, which triggered for Margaret and another mature student a mixture of anger and anxiety about the judgments of academia and what gets valued, in relation to their lived experience.

Rather than creating an alternative site for learning on the MAPOD as I have previously espoused, in that moment I reinforced the learning conventions of the academic system, which tend to promote the ‘other’ world of academic judgment and denies the authenticity of learning as perceived by Margaret to be ‘good

enough' and personally significant. I experienced myself, not for the first time, as a 'living contradiction' (Whitehead, 1999).

The anxiety of the set members was directed at the student whose work I suggested had got the right balance. By comparison, she was the youngest in the set, having completed her first degree in recent years. This suggested her peers gave her an edge in terms of knowing what was expected. In attempting to recover the situation and heal the learning dynamics-relationships within the set, I was trying to craft a way forward. However, it was not something I was able to do in an instant - the damage had been done and it would take a greater effort than the apology I was able to muster at that time to remedy the damage done in this learning relationship. It was, however, a lesson in learning to bite my tongue and to think before I speak. To ask myself when confronted with such questions as "Which assignment is the best?" and "What is the purpose and whose interests will it serve?". Moreover, it was a lesson in the inequality (or rather enormity) of power held by tutors and those regarded as academic authority figures.

Selvini (1980) suggests that the systemic practitioner has to develop a neutrality of practice, such that she is aligned to everyone and no-one at the same time. The systemic process was first developed as part of the systemic Milan approach to family therapy, now applied more generally to a systemic approach to people and organisations. Along with the principles of the reflecting team, I had been trying to apply this approach as a guide to my practice on the MAPOD. I realised that I had been careless in the moment and needed to take much more care to be neutral if I were to develop reflexivity in reflective practice and if I were to improve the rationality and justice of my practice.

Even after all this time, I find myself wondering how best to get the balance right between the opportunities for shared learning for all and the needs of individuals to feel secure in their own integrity. I am reminded of the anxiety that assessment

seems to provoke for many a learner, and the emotional fragility that many mature practitioners bring with them to the learning relationship. I am also reminded that no matter how clearly a student might express knowledge of their own learning history, I can never truly know how they feel, as I only ever see glimpses of what their experience might mean to them, and that if I am to practice with 'care' I must be mindful of this.

### **Margaret's Self Assessment Statement (10 March 1999)**

Margaret says "It has been a breakthrough to articulate my own life theory... such that I need not be overwhelmed by academic theory". One of the goals she sets for the next assignment is to "find ways to use more effectively the theory of others while building my own theoretical synthesis". Her following statement is particularly revealing.

"Clearly the weakest aspect of the paper is its use of theory. However I maintain that striving to create my own theory and minimally using established theory is a vital stage in the spiral of developing real theoretical engagement. Rather than obediently quoting theorists, as I have for decades, I have been stubbornly struggling to formulate my own concepts. - I also feel more ready to take up the concepts of others, now that I have established my own foundation - but I must always be aware of my tendency to be over-awed by theory. I would continue to argue that questioning and skepticism of theory is an important step in deeper learning".

Margaret concludes her assessment in a postscript where she makes the following points and asks a question which is to lead her to a topic of research in her next assignment.

- "External assessment is quite threatening, setting off panic attacks.
- What makes a piece of work academically acceptable or though provoking?
- The only assessment I am qualified to make is whether this paper is a significant learning accomplishment for me [which she does].

- The rare opportunity MAPOD provides through the action learning set and tutor to get feedback, and to assess whether one's writing was understood or whether it resonated with others."

### *The external examiner*

Margaret's was among the work sent to the external examiner for year one of Cohort 4. I quote her feedback in respect of Margaret's first assignment in its entirety. The external examiner was from a university which ran a Ph.D. programme using action research and was interested in the new forms of knowledge creation that this type of academic work spawns. She was herself working with mature students, some of whom were in consultancy, and she saw her role as an external examiner as a facilitative and educative one. From my perspective, and that of other MAPOD tutors, this was much appreciated.

### *The external examiner's feedback*

"Good, a fascinating account and a great 'starting point'. It takes time to explore the different levels of reflection and the same living examples can be developed, with the use of further reflection linked to ideas and parallels in the literature which may serve to increase levels of understanding re future consultancy work.

It is important to note that an 'analytical' approach should not be seen as solely the territory of the impersonal and terse. The 'personal wordy and rambling' is only fine as a starting point. For learning to occur there needs to be movement towards understanding, connections, even patterns which, although emerging from within and grounded in experience, can withstand analysis and add to existing, newly developing knowledge around the development of such new forms of methodology and theory. (Such knowledge is different in kind from what is viewed as established academic knowledge.) This assignment shows that the first steps have been taken".

These comments were made available to the students with the intention of providing further educative feedback, and to enable them to navigate the expectations of the academy and draw on the opportunities the MAPOD

approach to teaching and learning created for developing new forms of knowledge. The sharing of the external examiner's feedback is an important part of my practice to lessen the contradiction, because the contradiction of what the academy may want and what the individual may judge to be 'good enough' will remain until and unless the student can make sense of where they are in their learning and development in relation to where the academy wants them to be.

Reading the external examiner's comments, I felt that she had reached the same conclusions as I had in respect of the balance between the experiential account and exploration of the relevant literature. Furthermore, she had raised useful points concerning the analysis of experiential knowing, and the critique of it as essential to the process of academic rigour.

## **Assignment Two**

The second assignment requires the students to engage in a research activity relevant to them that would afford them the opportunity to try out an approach and/or method and review, and then reflect and report on that process. Margaret defines her project around the issue of assessment on MAPOD. In her assignment (24 May 1999) she frames the 'problem context' in the first instance with reference to the programme handbook, about which she identifies the following characteristics:

- "A joint assessment with tutors and peers.
- A learner centred approach.
- The requirement to provide evidence of your learning.
- Action learning sets offer tutorial support - helping formulate projects for assessment and subjecting them to continuous review."

Margaret argues that the handbook does not acknowledge the subjective, emotional or social process of assessment sufficiently and, more specifically,



fails to define assessment as a function of cycles of learning. Furthermore, Margaret states anxiety about assessment as her personal motivation, triggered by the rating of the individual assignments during the previous process (the 'living contradiction' described in the previous story). Drawing on an extract from her reflective diary, Margaret reveals:

“Could I have acknowledged at that opening moment how dreadful the assessment experience had been for me? I was being childish, distracting attention from my real fear of being judged, compounded by not knowing the rules of the game”.

As part of Margaret's research activity she does three things:

1. Compares the criteria used by another MAPOD set (concluding that it is very similar to those drawn up by our set).
2. Spends an afternoon talking with me to explore the history of thinking behind the MAPOD approach to assessment and learning (which Margaret calls an interview, and which I would describe as a conversation with a purpose).
3. Invites the set to engage in a collaborative enquiry to explore the assessment, framing the purpose as improving assessment within the MAPOD set.

*What did it mean for me to work with Margaret in this instant?*

First of all I wanted to show Margaret that I was responsive to her anxiety and to her desire to explore this issue further. This meant being willing to invest time with Margaret to review and explore the assessment process with her, sharing my understanding of what the tutor team saw as the teaching, learning and assessment strategy for this programme. Although this was the fourth cohort, the assessment process and quality of the teaching, learning and assessment experience was continuously being shaped and improved by our individual and

collective experiences. I welcomed Margaret's enthusiasm to take this issue as a research question forward, both for her personally and for the set. I felt it was a timely intervention that would add to everyone's learning, and I felt it was significant that this was being driven by Margaret and not by me.

My commitment to Margaret was to give her support and encouragement to invite the other set members (her peers) to come on board and explore this issue in a collaborative way. I want to suggest that my openness to this enquiry was a critical step in developing a trusting relationship with Margaret in the longer term, as well as being an important response at that time for the learning of that set, and not just a cynical attempt to curry favour for my earlier lapse in judgment.

Furthermore, I want to show by way of this example how I 'hold' the learning as a social process working with the issues and dynamics of individuals and the set, and in doing so, facilitate the exploration of issues of power in the teaching, learning and assessment process. I want to suggest that this is an important aspect of my theory in use; in other words, in my practice, helping me pursue the question "how do I improve my practice?" in a reflective and active manner.

I believe it would be helpful to give a glimpse of the learning that this intervention nurtured, by sharing my recollection of the process that took place at the next set meeting which both Margaret and I taped with the agreement of the set (on 7 May 1999). It is thus with the aid of the tape that I recall the events of that meeting.

The set consists of five students and the tutor (me). This is the same set that worked together during the life of the first assignment. It is our second meeting of this cycle. Each student has approximately one hour in the set to progress their work, which they can use as they wish. In preparation, Margaret has e-mailed set

members with her proposal, inviting them to participate in a collaborative enquiry. This is Margaret's hour and she frames the session and begins checking out the process of buy-in.

The MAPOD sets are tutor facilitated and I envisage my role to be, on the one hand, like that of another set member and learner (in other words a participant), and on the other hand wearing my tutor hat, being ready to support Margaret as an individual and/or the group as a whole as needs be and, where appropriate in the process, to intervene with educative contributions. Thus my facilitative style allows for a good deal of autonomy and emergence, and seeks to be educative rather than directive, and is made where connections emerge in the dialogic process.

My initial intervention is to help clarify where people are in the process of buy-in. There is an initial uncertainty about this as one member expresses not feeling collaborative, which opens up a broader conversation about ownership, suggesting that true collaboration depends on ownership by all, and an acknowledgement of the difficulty for collaborative enquiry when one person has done the thinking, or appears to own the problem. However, all the members agree to explore the issue but state a preference for a more fluid process than Margaret had proposed. What emerges is a dialogue about assessment, which leads to greater understanding and shared meaning about how we might proceed (individually and collectively) to improve and enhance the next assessment experience in the set.

Margaret opens the dialogue by describing her own feelings about assessment. She tells us that she was dissatisfied with the last assessment day and of her unhappiness in writing the self-assessment statement, and that she found the experience confusing, befuddling and angst ridden. Her perception was that assessment was an issue on people's minds from the time the set first formed at

Hunton Park, and she described assessment as “a dragon I needed to turn around and face”. It was not an experience she felt that helped her to grow, feeling more disruptive than constructive.

A set member offers a continuum of assessment, asking the question “think of something you have achieved and how you know you achieved it”. This prompted the response “feedback”, and so it was suggested that feedback and judgment were the two ends of this continuum, of which she says MAPOD was high on feedback compared to judgment.

Another student suggests that we were being assessed all the time, especially in the work context, and that it was both a subjective process and one that is hard and rigid with judgments; prompting another student to comment on the way feedback is given as either ‘constructive’ or ‘judgmental’. The question of criteria was also introduced. My contribution was to say that my intention was to create an opportunity in the action learning circle for assessment that was rich in feedback, and acknowledging there was a paradox; since there has to be a judgment on an MA course which asks “is this a pass?”. I further suggest that the validity of criteria is influenced by the context, raising the question of standards of judgment in relation to the criteria we might determine as valid in the MAPOD context, asking “what is important here?”. I acknowledge that perhaps the worst fear that everyone brings within them to assessment is being told “you are not good enough”. This prompts a set member to suggest that members have a responsibility to be psychologically prepared, suggesting that the state in which you approach assessment influences your performance, and she frames this as the psychological process of learning.

I chip in, sharing the Biggs (1989) model on the three approaches to learning, surface, strategic and deep, the latter being the aim of the MAPOD learning strategy. The question is asked “Can you hold your awareness of your approach

when you come to assessment?”. It is also suggested “that all that ‘good stuff’ gets forgotten with anxiety”. A set member builds on this to reflect on the practice of the group at the last meeting, saying:

“It was our first time, we were all tuned into each others anxiety, we gave lots of positive feedback ‘you’re doing well’, ‘you’re ok’, there was a lot of reassurance.”

Another suggests that positive experience acknowledges what you are doing well and suggests you keep doing it, and constructive feedback suggests what you could do better, avoiding the negative terms. “Part of the assessment process is [she suggests] learning to give the feedback in a manner that is appreciative and constructive”. “Carefulness [says another] is a two way process, both in the giving and the receiving”, emphasising in her words “the balance of responsibility in feedback”.

Margaret declares this to be a new way of thinking about feedback for her, and she describes her experience of workplace feedback as “given by someone in power and with authority - taking it and saying ‘yes, I will do better’”. Margaret states that the ideal purpose of the programme for her is to feel “clear and right about her own purposes, criteria and assessment of self”, which prompts the response from a peer to suggest “no-one can give you that, it must come from within”.

The dialogue then moves to a lengthy exploration of how we use the criteria we establish, whether it is ‘chicken or egg’ in both the composition of one’s work or in the assessment of a piece of work, how loosely or otherwise we apply it, and how tightly or otherwise we frame it. Several people speak of their intuitive reading (and writing) of a piece, finding its coherence and resonance before looking to the criteria to see how they might judge whether it fits the criteria or not, in contrast with using the criteria in tick box fashion or writing to it. One

member suggests that assessment can be reductionist, if the reading takes a process of deconstruction. Acknowledging this, I add that there is often a tendency to read a piece of work noticing that XY and Z is missing, rather than appreciating what is there.

As the dialogue unfolded, it becomes clear that Margaret is asking for more structure, and is asked by a peer “could you not give yourself that framework?”. Margaret ponders this question and then indicates that she can with verification from the group. This opens up a subsequent conversation about the audiences we write for, and an exploration of the academic audience. Again, I chip in with Reason and Marshall’s (1987) framework,<sup>78</sup> in which they identify three audiences, ‘me, us and them’, which I suggest could be applied to any academic piece.

The set then proceeds to explore how satisfied or not they are with the criteria they had set previously, with Margaret suggesting that we need to develop an “assessment commitment to each other”, which she says is “difficult to put on paper” and that we might build on that, developing or clarifying what we mean by specific headings, and agree how we would set up the next assessment day. There was some tension here between Margaret’s expressed need for more structure and the desire of others to keep the assessment criteria broadly framed, most set members being satisfied with the headings we had previously identified as criteria. This is later acknowledged in Margaret’s assignment.

Margaret submits and passes her assignment and is asked by the group to write a reflective letter as a way of consolidating her learning, facilitating her to put some space between the process, the writing of the account and her reflections and learning from it. In her letter (dated 25 June 1999) she says “I feel that the

---

<sup>78</sup> From “Research as a personal process”.

paper is 'premature', born too soon within the research spiral, without enough cycles of feedback, reflection and refinement within the research process", stating that the paper itself was the first opportunity to feedback to the set the data drawn from the dialogue. Margaret suggests that in an ideal world the process and basis for drawing out the themes would have been agreed between them, if it was to be a truly collaborative enquiry, and she expresses her discomfort at doing this herself.

Commenting on what she describes as the "linear nature" of her proposal and "the mechanistic attempt at facilitation of the dialogue session", Margaret's reflective letter further reveals how she believed "the voice of authority" had influenced her thinking:

"I feel that my 'positivist' tendencies are based in my desire to control situations and people and, underneath, the underlying desire for rules. This probably stems from my judgmental, authoritarian father but was also reinforced by the frightened 1950s world of my childhood, where the overriding message was to obey, conform, and stay within the rules".

As the reflective letter was submitted after the last meeting of the set, the contents and their potential for learning and further reflection lay primarily with Margaret, though I made a mental note of them before consigning them to my subconscious as a difficulty common to students who are grappling with the contradictions of different research paradigms. Although at this stage I did not know if I would work with Margaret again, exchange of this type of information might well take place between myself and the other MAPOD tutors if the student has a difficulty in the future, or as a means of informing our design of a future MAPOD module.

The external examiner's comments include the following feedback, which echo the perspective of Margaret and the set recognising the need for space in the action research process and time for reflection:

"Interesting one on assessment. Research focused on experimenting with a full/learning research cycle. Chose the type of action research associated with professional practice. Another thought provoking assignment. Shows clearly why there is a need for 'space' around the assessment process, to give it a chance to grow and develop in appropriate ways."

For me, this opportunity to work with Margaret had proved to be positive, one that seemed to serve her immediate learning needs, as well as offer an organic opportunity to draw out learning from the MAPOD process for the members of the action learning set as a whole. The cycle of action research, the use of dialogue in the inquiry process, the participation of set members as subjects and objects of their own inquiry, the role of the learning set providing support and challenge and bringing questioning insights, their reflection on action, their role as critical friends facilitating a critique to practice, and my facilitative style, all wove into the teaching, learning and assessment activity which created a positive emotional and social learning experience. But most significant of all was that my inquiry had brought home to me, in collaboration with Margaret and the other students in the set, the importance of developing an ethic of care in the teaching and learning relationship, and one that was sufficiently sensitive to the anxieties that assessment, feedback and academic judgment could provoke.

At the next residential block, the MAPOD participants decided to make changes to the action learning sets, reforming their membership. Margaret moved on to a different set and I did not work with her directly again until the learning sets for the dissertation were formed in the following year.



## **The Dissertation**

In this section I propose to introduce the territory of inquiry Margaret covered, to give a sense of the journey that she undertook. Afterwards, I will give a glimpse of how I held the learning space with Margaret during her inquiry by drawing from videotaped evidence of two action learning set sessions.

As a result of family bereavement, the loss of her mother and then her father within weeks of one another, Margaret was the last to complete her dissertation from this action learning set, submitting it in May 2001. The title of her dissertation is “The butterfly emerges: a personal action inquiry”, and it is an inquiry of the self that begins with the question “Who am I?” (Updike, 2001:2).

The period between December 2000 and May 2001 was a difficult time for Margaret, in which she struggled to pursue her inquiry and compose her account. For me, and I believe other set members, this was a challenging time too, not least because Margaret’s struggle in her inquiry tested us beyond our normal levels of competence in holding a space which supported her personal and academic development.

In my view, Margaret’s dissertation tests academic convention by excavating her inquiry in part through archetypal psychology. Furthermore, it provides a good example of how a student working with life issues through the dissertation process recognises and constructs that enquiry and how the tutor and set play a crucial role in supporting that process.

Margaret employs the Native American ‘medicine wheel’ to present a framework for the stages of her inquiry, describing the performance as “an act of self healing”. There is a marked shift in her form of representation from what she calls the path of explanation to the path of expression (Reason and Hawkins,

citing Hillman, 1975), describing archetypal knowing in the path of expression as “the deepest patterns of psychic functioning, the roots of the soul governing the perspectives we have of ourselves and the world” (1988:83-84).

Margaret describes her inquiry as a “vision quest”. She uses the language of metaphor, symbolism and ritual in her presentation, saying “This presentation is not solely a report of action inquiry it is a performance” (Updike, 2001:1). Margaret locates her inquiry within the context of life as inquiry: “my deeper question was revealed a question of life purpose. ‘What am I here for?’” (Updike, 2001:2).

The first position on the ‘medicine wheel’ is a place to get in touch with feelings, discipline the emotions and let go of images others hold of us (Updike, 2001:40). Margaret began with a life history inquiry, explored with the help of a friend who interviewed her using McAdam’s method, which in the event did not provide her with the answers or insights she was looking for. In her dissertation, Margaret argues that the McAdam method is far too positivistic and linear to account for a life. However, throughout her dissertation Margaret provides us with stories of events in her life that have clearly influenced her, offering an explanation of the roots of “the voice of authority” and the influence of “the scientific method” in shaping her world-view. One concerns the humiliation of having an essay read aloud at a school science fair, as an example of how not to write. Another, called “clockwise”, describes her delight in telling her father (an engineering professor) that she has learned to ride her bike, and the feelings generated by his response which, rather than celebrating her achievement, was focused on getting her to articulate how the pedals worked, a task that Margaret struggled with and which took the pleasure out of her felt excitement and achievement. Another, called “The Smelly Cheese”, concerns an incident where Margaret, a child in her high chair, refuses to eat some cheese, only to find it

presented again at the next meal, because “the rules” demanded this (Updike, 2001:14, 80-82).

A further story is provided of her life as a young woman, a radical student of the 1960s, and subsequently with her first husband (ibid: 62-63) whom she describes as “a co-dependent of purpose”. It is this story, written in poetic form, that marks her shift from a path of explanation to expression. In her disenchantment with McAdam, Margaret does not abandon her search for life story. Rather, she abandons his method for capturing her life story.

When the set first learned of this disenchantment, we asked “if you are not doing life story, what are you doing?”. Margaret tells us (page 93) that we met her with “polite puzzlement” and she suggests “we were not discussing my process of inquiry; we were concentrating on how to produce a product”. This comment throws light on a real tension that exists between facilitating and supervising the dissertation process, and on my power as a facilitator to influence the focus of attention in either of these domains. It is another potential area for contradiction.

The second position on the medicine wheel is a place of “deep introspection” (Updike, 2001:56). Margaret turned to archetypal psychology, drawing out powerful images, which she later named as the “elf child” (‘eternal girl’) and the “Crone-hag” (Updike, 2001:66-67). When Margaret first introduced her encounter with these archetypes, I and other members of the set were concerned enough to explore with Margaret her psychological well-being, and to enquire with her whether counselling would be a good idea.

This is important in terms of my educative values as a practitioner, because given that I support the use of methods such as working with life story as critical to the process of personal and professional development (and I believe in the inclusion of the emotional in the learning process as well as the cognitive), I nonetheless

believe and have always espoused on MAPOD the need to have in mind a boundary between that which is concerned with education and development of the person and that which is concerned with personal therapy. From an ethical point of view, I have always distinguished MAPOD as an educational programme designed as a Masters degree and not as an alternative to therapy. Whilst boundaries are not absolute when working with personal and professional development, I believe I have a responsibility as an educator to help individuals navigate this terrain, and this may include asking them to consider whether they need to consider personal therapy. In working this way, I believe that I am facilitating a safe space for learning and one within the competence of all concerned. Furthermore, I believe that this approach can sit comfortably alongside my belief in the need to create a safe haven that enables students to reclaim their integrity, boost their batteries and heal emotional scars of labouring in the world today.

For Margaret's account of the set's reaction see pages 70 and 93 in her dissertation, where she says:

"The turning point feels like the session at Hunton Park in mid-November, on the second day of the assessment [for the other set members] when I had two hours of full attention from the entire set and we discussed my actual inquiry not my latest draft".

I had a deep sense of confidence in Margaret's own integrity and accepted her decision not to pursue the option of counselling, though I continued to encourage her to reflect carefully on the direction this inquiry was taking and her capacity to manage it alone, so as to prevent it being a source of harm.

Drawing on Anderson's account of the Celtic Oracles, Updike (2001:71) tells us that the 'hag' is testing her readiness for change, and that the symbolism of the

child is concerned with hope and trust in the future, in other words, suggesting a talent to be nurtured.

The third position on the medicine wheel is the place of mind, knowledge and spiritual awakening (Updike, 2001:75). During a celebration of the Celtic feast of All Hallow's Eve (to mark the beginning of winter) Margaret discovers, in grieving for her mother, her own role as 'ancestor'. For Margaret, this signifies 'continuity' and life purpose, which later appears in the dissertation in the form of the archetype of great mother earth. Spurred on by Hillman's (1996) belief in the uniqueness of the person, Margaret is searching for her purpose, which she later clarifies as "life purpose", the fourth stage of the medicine wheel being "New Vision and Purpose" (Updike, 2001:86). Now Margaret describes "looking to the future, learning to trust her own voice" (ibid., 2001:86) and "attending to the complexities of life and her growing internal authority" (ibid., 2001:92).

Reflecting on her dissertation process, Margaret discusses the common tendency to model others and acknowledges that her initial exploration of life story work was modelled to an extent on my doing it, and she provides a caution for students and tutors of copying the direction of another without serious consideration of the individual's motives and needs. Recounting this she says:

"Why did she let me set out in this simplistic way? Did she not see that I was suffering from crippling emotion, was looking for simplicity and a formula, for comfort upon a risky path? In the autumn, she realised I was in trouble and rose to my aid. By the second draft she became concerned. She tried to outline something for me, to extract some sense, some argument for what I was wrestling with. More importantly, she expressed concern: 'are you alright'? It was when I admitted that I needed help that she came forth. The key responsibility was mine that I should acknowledge when I need help. And the key question is, does the teacher/counsellor/healer then rise to the request and give what is needed. Mary gave permission, gave space, gave an ear, gave concerned but sensible responses, judged me positively, as serious, as sensible, that I was not failing, I was only struggling" (Updike, 2001:97).

Margaret says that what started out as feedback to me proved to be something about her as she realised her shift in relation to “authority figures”, a shift from “imitation to independence” (ibid., 2001:99).

The final act of Margaret’s presentation was to step into the centre of the medicine wheel, an act which she describes as “stepping into power”, a turning point and transformation.

### *The videotapes*

I have two videotapes of sessions working with Margaret in January and February 2001. These were made towards the end of the dissertation period, the first when Margaret returned to MAPOD shortly after the death of her father, to attend a session to provide a fellow set member with feedback on her draft dissertation, and the second, when Margaret came to see me for a one-to-one session to get her own dissertation writing back on track.

You can view Margaret’s check-in for the first session by loading the CD-R and clicking onto the file.<sup>79</sup> The check-in is designed to create a space and point of connection in the learning relationship, in which we (students and tutor) can meet each other first, and more fully, as human beings. It is part of the process of community building and one of the MAPOD rituals used at the beginning of action learning sets and residential sessions. It serves to set the emotional tone and provide a container for what may emerge in the process.

---

<sup>79</sup> File on CD-R, named Louise Part 1. At the end of Part 1 Margaret’s check-in begins, and proceeds to parts 2 and 3, or you can wait to view this later when I return to this process in Appendix 2.

Although Margaret is not presenting her work on this occasion, her check-in is an important part of her process that she acknowledges and which lays a foundation for our subsequent meeting. It provides both an opportunity to re-engage with set members present and the tutor, as well as enabling us to acknowledge Margaret's grieving process in the context of our learning relationship.

The second tape is a continuity of this process. As there are only the two of us present, the session takes the form of a kitchen table conversation that meanders from one topic to the other. An outsider might wonder what work is being achieved here, as I follow the natural flow of the conversation as Margaret discusses the experience of community present at her father's funeral and her process of writing his obituary. It is in these moments of reflection that Margaret's relationship to stories of her relationship with her father as "an authority figure" dissolve, freeing her up to subsequently compose her dissertation, constructing an account of her inquiry into self-identity, and enabling her to reclaim her voice and mind.

In both tapes *I do not do anything*; suffice to be present, witnessing and affirming and inwardly clarifying her process, and in the latter, sharing a reference to Hartill's (1998) work that draws explicitly on Hillman's work on archetypes and his belief in the 'soul making' qualities drawn from the archetypal image. The work is in a book on creative writing in personal development that I have had in mind to show to Margaret for a while. It is, I hope, a gesture that affirms Margaret's knowing and shows that I have taken her approach seriously.

## **How Does My Living Theory Constitute a Discipline of Educational Action Research?**

Let me reiterate my position: Firstly, my living theory is guided by beliefs and values that I bring to my professional practice as an educator working with adult learners in higher education; secondly, let me suggest that each of the three assignments present distinct spirals in a cycle of action research, in which I *plan* to facilitate my students' learning with care in ways that respond to their learning and development needs and afford opportunities for emancipation. The structure of the course allows me to *review*, *reflect on* and *evaluate* my practice in respect of my professional values and educative purposes in a systematic way at the end of each assignment. Implicit in the learning relationship is a continuous and iterative process of hypothesising and sense making, asking the question in the context of the students' written accounts "What is going on here?".

The values that I bring to my professional life are in part contained in the design of the curricula as well as embodied within my practice. The design of the first assignment provides students with an opportunity to reflect on their learning history and life course. In doing so, the possibility of a critique emerges with regard to the interaction between system and life-world, which students variously draw out. The system (social and cultural) includes functions and roles, for example, family roles, roles of men and women in society. Thus, the process of individuation and socialisation are integrally entwined; one cannot exist without the other.

In Margaret's case, her first assignment raises her concern to 'find voice' which she presents as a struggle, striving to articulate what she knows. She is explicit about what she describes as "a crude rejection of any authority other than myself" manifest in her assignment as a reluctance to engage with propositional knowledge. It is what Belenky *et al.* (1986) term an expression of the



‘subjectivist’ position. Furthermore, Margaret tells us her stance is one of mid-life rebellion, having previously been a “good student”, by which she means her hitherto obedience and conformity to the ‘rules’ of the academy. Additionally, she tells us that her learning is impeded when she experiences threats or feels vulnerable.

The best I can do at this stage in our learning relationship is to affirm her story, and attempt to show her that I resonate with the experience of ‘silence’ in relation to voices of authority and to nudge her gently towards those whose writing speaks to her experience.

My understanding of the perspective of silence as a way of knowing is informed primarily by my own experience, which I have discussed earlier in this thesis. Rogers (1983:121) emphasises empathetic understanding, the ability to understand the student’s reactions from the inside as integral to effective interpersonal relations in the facilitation of learning. Secondly, my understanding has been informed by the work of Belenky *et al.* (1986), whose perspectives on women’s ways of knowing offer resonance.

Through the emergence of subjectivism women become their own authorities. Belenky *et al.* (1986:55) tell us that the move into subjectivism is not tied to a specific age, cutting across age, class and educational boundaries. Unlike the advantaged males in Perry’s (1970) study of middleclass male students at Harvard, Belenky *et al.* (1986:64) discovered that the process of “wresting power away from authorities” was not the same for women. The “good student” is rewarded for her obedience and conformity, and rather than asserting their own view as the males in Perry’s study, Belenky *et al.* (1986:65) notice that the ethic of the ‘hidden multiplist’ (Perry’s term for the subjectivist process) is that of the spectator, to watch and listen but not to act. Margaret was now determinedly rejecting the mantle of ‘good student’:

“As we listened to subjectivist women describe their attitudes about truth and knowing, we heard them argue against and stereotype those experts and remote authorities whom social institutions often promote as holding keys to truth-teachers, doctors, scientists, men in general. It was as if, by turning inward for answers, they had to deny strategies for knowing that they perceived as belonging to the masculine world” (Belenky *et al.*, 1986:71).

My reading of Margaret’s assignment was informed by the concept of ‘connected knowing’ (ibid.), a term I first encountered in Belenky *et al.* (1986). This involves reading from a position of empathy, with the intent of appreciating what was presented and not judging the text by what was absent or missing, which is characteristic of ‘separate knowing’ and, I would suggest, more common in academic judgment.

The paradox, of course, is that I too represent ‘authority’ in my role in the academy. I am thus concerned to build a teaching and learning relationship of trust with Margaret, as with other students, which includes creating an awareness of authors and alternative academic practices that do not perpetuate the myth of the student as ‘the empty vessel’, a term employed by Freire (1985:21) to describe the banking model of education, where the tutor sees education as a means of depositing knowledge into the head of the student.

Up until the moment when I experienced myself as a living contradiction, I felt I was doing ‘ok’, in that I had been living my values in practice. It is, as Lather (cited by Maguire, 2001:65) suggests, that despite good and “liberating intentions” we still manage to “contribute to dominance”, and she calls for the development of self-reflexivity that supports practice improvement and empowerment. As a reflective practitioner, I am aware that I have blundered into ranking by comparison of the students’ papers, causing a great deal of unnecessary anxiety and undermining the very learning relationship which I have

otherwise been intent on creating as a positive, supportive and nurturing experience, and in so doing, I have potentially usurped the social goals of collaborative learning with competitive learning. Since some of the students, including Margaret, did not find my intervention to be either positive or nurturing, I experienced a negation of my values despite my momentary impulse to rank order the assignments in an attempt to educate and make explicit the application of criteria in my judgment.

The opportunity for continuity of the learning relationship afforded by the holistic design of the MAPOD programme enables me to redeem myself with this student as she takes forward her issues of authority and assessment as a basis for her research assignment. In a programme where student contact and the learning relationship is confined to a modular basis, the learning relationship may have ended with these issues remaining as unfinished business for the student, and for the tutor, leaving a sense of failure toward that particular student or students.

Zeichner and Liston (1996:9-11) suggest that Dewey identifies three attitudes integral to reflective action, these being open-mindedness, responsibility and wholeheartedness, and they suggest that Dewey regards the process of reflective practice not as a series of steps but as “a way of being as a teacher”, as “a holistic way of meeting and responding to problems”. I suggested in my account that my openness to Margaret’s inquiry was a critical step in building trust in the teaching and learning relationship, both for Margaret and other set members. In accepting the error of my judgment and the consequences of that action for learning, I was moved to take responsibility to facilitate the learning within the set, by variously adopting role as clarifier, participant and learner, and educator; listening and working with the students toward a shared meaning of what constructive and empowering assessment and feedback may involve. In this respect I employed my role as an authority within the academy wholeheartedly

with the attitude that I too could learn something new, committed both to the education of my students and to my own development as a teacher.

The third assignment serves to test my open-mindedness even further, when Margaret presents an archetypal account of her inquiry/search for self-identity. At the same time. I am moved to respond to her life issues (the loss of both her parents) and to demonstrate care and concern for her well-being as a person.

When Margaret first presented her images of the ‘elf child’ and the ‘hag’, I found them somewhat disturbing and they caused me to feel concern for Margaret and her well-being. The reaction of other set members was similar and it was in this process that I asked Margaret the question “Are you all right?”. Her answer was positive and so I reflected again on whether the felt anxiety was to do with my and other set members’ lack of understanding about what these images meant. At the same time Roger’s (1983) proposition “the locus of evaluation resides within the person” came to the forefront of my mind, reminding me of the importance of trusting the integrity of Margaret to know what was best for her and within her capability, even when her inquiry with the use of archetypes seemed to be not without some difficulty.

“The locus of evaluation we might say, resides definitely in the learner *its essence is meaning*. When such learning takes place, the element of meaning to the learner is built into the whole experience”. Rogers (1983:20).

Having said that, I do not want to underestimate the ethical tension that this created, as I was concerned for Margaret that she did not pursue this process of exploration if it were harmful, and I made that clear. Care and counselling (the latter with a small c) is part and parcel of an educator’s role, but in higher education this entails finding a balance between respecting the autonomy of the

adult learner and the responsibility on the part of the educator to facilitate an ethic of care.<sup>80</sup>

Zeichner and Liston (1996:12) remind us that “reflective teachers are fallible teachers”, and this is evidenced by Margaret experiencing my focus attention and that of the set’s, being on the product and not initially on her process at the November meeting. Again, experiencing the negation of my values in practice, I was moved wholeheartedly to commit myself to work with Margaret and be mindful of her process, over and above the product, for the remainder of her time on MAPOD. The video file offers some evidence of this in the check-in process as we engaged with Margaret to acknowledge her grieving process when she returned to the set shortly after the funeral of her father.

Through the work of Marshall and Reason (1987),<sup>81</sup> I was aware that past distress could emerge as an underlying issue in the research and learning process. This knowledge enabled me to see the link between Margaret’s struggle to find voice, her earlier resistance to voices of authority and her relationship with her father as a key authority figure in her past. I was particularly sensitive to this during our last one-to-one meeting as she discussed the writing of his obituary, how this process enabled her to see him in a different light, and in turn, how it helped her realise that she could change her relationship toward him. Though it was not the grieving process itself that re-stimulated old patterns of distress for Margaret,<sup>82</sup> the grieving process inevitably brought them to a head. In writing the obituary, Margaret began to see how her stories had helped keep her attached to this restrictive pattern/relationship toward her father. Good research, according Reason and Marshall (2001:415), “is an expression of a need to learn and

---

<sup>80</sup> Preferably with the student by encouraging them to take care of themselves and to seek appropriate help from professional counselling services if appropriate.

<sup>81</sup> In “Research as a personal process”.

<sup>82</sup> This had been brewing from the outset of her MAPOD journey.

change, to shift some aspect of oneself". Marshall and Reason describe the process of working past distresses in the research project as:

"a natural tendency or drive towards the full realisation of the self; we suggest that, in the choice of research topic and inquiry process, the researcher moves into the anxiety of the old distress, and that this is (intentionally or unintentionally) a bid for personal development" (2001:414).

In writing her dissertation, Margaret was able to show us the journey that she had taken whilst working through this distress, at the end of which she was able to see the wisdom of her authority and experience.

Reason and Marshall (2001:415) suggest autobiographical and creative writing, such as Goldberg's (1986) methods to facilitate life story work as one way to address this distress. It was an approach that I was familiar with, having worked with my own life stories and which I was enthusiastic about and encouraged students, who like Margaret expressed an interest in this work, to try. As we now know, this method did not suit Margaret and she rejected this approach, pursuing her inquiry through the use of archetypal psychology.

I wonder now, in the light of my experience of working with Margaret, whether I could have been more careful about my enthusiasm, employing what Langer (1977 and 1989, cited in Rhem), in her work on 'mindful learning', calls "teaching conditionally", which is to "infuse all you know with a healthy uncertainty". Once I understood Margaret's need to follow a path of expression and extend the path of explanation that a narrative account offers, I took responsibility to support Margaret in her use of archetypes by 'keeping her in mind' when I read suitable books.<sup>83</sup>

---

<sup>83</sup> Such as *The Self on the Page*, Hunt and Sampson (1998), in which I discovered and later passed on the reference to Graham Hartill's contribution.

Winters (1998:370) in asking “where does ‘theory’ come from in action research”, describes a process of “improvisation as we draw on different aspects of our prior professional and general knowledge in the course of our inquiry”. The account I have given of working with Margaret is, I suggest, an example of this.

## **Conclusion**

What does it mean to facilitate a personal development ‘project’ and to support a student in mid-life transition? These questions framed the teaching and learning relationship in the course of my living inquiry of ‘working with Margaret’.

The journey described in the assignments sets the context for Margaret’s MAPOD ‘project’, that of a life inquiry, in which her search is articulated as a search-quest for self-identity (through her dissertation) and culminates with her reclaiming her voice and mind.

I want to suggest that my living theory of educative relations has largely been in support of this quest, facilitating Margaret’s personal development process at key points in the course of MAPOD, punctuated by experiencing myself as a ‘living contradiction’. In turn, these contradictions have caused me to reflect on my practice and consider how I might improve this practice. The dialectical nature of reality and the internalisation of propositional knowledge that has resonance for me, and my students, combines to create a theory of my action research.

I began this cycle of action inquiry with a desire to facilitate with care. The learning relationship on MAPOD and the conversations that mark the relationship between student and tutor is a sacred encounter, because students like Margaret confront their distress and share in the process their story. For the tutor, this entails honouring the story; listening for the story and helping its

articulation of events, paying attention to the meaning given to these events and helping individuals see where these stories might be problematic. It is a dialectical process that requires an appreciative understanding of that which is socially and historically embedded in our ways of knowing, that help me work with and address cultural and gendered implications and inequities of the system. Witherell and Noddings suggest that:

“we are obliged to devise a method of receiving stories that mediates the space between the self that is told, and the self that listens: a method that returns a story to the teller that is both hers and not hers, that contains herself in good company” (1991:70).

It is this containment of Margaret in good company that is evidenced in the educative relations in MAPOD, captured on the video clip check-in when she returns from her father’s funeral, supporting the transformation of Margaret’s story, and facilitating its return to her anew. Belonging, identity and care for the soul and emancipation are interdependent elements of this MAPOD community that support the wholeness that Margaret seeks. These values are similar to those expressed by Waldegrave and Tamasese (1994:191-208), who describe a systemic approach to “Just Therapy, one that promotes care for the soul”.

What does it mean to feel the necessities of another to educate with care? For me, this has involved listening to stories like Margaret’s, to see in such stories the humanity they contain, and to encourage the silenced meanings to emerge and to educate us. The education system denies emotion in the learning process and privileges a masculine-rational epistemology of practice that leaves us with an educative process that is cold, that does not care for the soul. Waldegrave and Tamasese (ibid.) tell us that the “soul is associated with one’s roots and liberation”.



In the last conversation/meeting I had with Margaret before she wrote up her dissertation, we were engaged in a process of soul searching as we wove between talk of meaning and aspirations of the MAPOD community and the Presbyterian community of Margaret's origins that she re-experienced at the funerals of her parents. For many of us, our sense of belonging is lost or fractured as we struggle to live and survive in the global context of modernisation. Educative spaces like that created on MAPOD are essential to the re-integration of our wholeness, helping us reclaim voice, mind and soul. Like Waldegrave and Tamasese (1994:200-201), I am drawn to the words of the song "Irish Heartbeat" by Van Morrison, who proclaims "this whole world is so cold, don't care nothing for your soul" and invokes you to "talk a while with your own ones". It is that deep sense of belonging and identity that the values of the teaching and learning relationships within the MAPOD community serve to nurture.

The fundamental purpose of educational action research is to improve the rationality and justice of my practice. I am suggesting that this case study 'working with Margaret' offers an exemplar of that process, in that it supports the highest aspirations of our humanity in supporting a humane and liberating form of education. My educative relations through working with Margaret have helped me address the rationality and justice of my practice, and with her support and that of the other action learning set members, I have been moved to inquire purposefully toward the facilitation of an ethic of care in my teaching and learning relationships.

## CHAPTER EIGHT: MATERNAL THINKING - A TRANSFORMATIVE DISCOURSE FOR EDUCATIVE RELATIONS

In this chapter, I introduce the idea of ‘maternal thinking’ (Ruddick, 1989) as a transformative discourse for my educative practice in higher education. I explain how this idea resonated with me and how I have used it as a heuristic device in the service of reflecting on and improving my practice. I do this by narrative accounting and by drawing on artefacts from my practice, including a tape-recorded session of an action learning set meeting, as a vehicle for reflection. The tape captures a routine convention of my practice, namely a ‘check-in’ process which I use at the beginning of learning sessions, to enable individuals in the group to touch base with one another, and which I use to identify attitudes, emotions and issues that are influencing the learning climate and which may hinder the learning of individuals or the group, and the teaching and learning relationship itself. I seek to show how this approach to my inquiry enables me to reflect on my practice and create more care-full educative relations with my students. This story represents the next cycle of inquiry in my research.

### **Introduction: Maternal Thinking**

Maternal thinking resonated with me in that it seemed to speak to me and *name* an ethic of practice that I was working towards and a way of being in educative relations with my students. It spoke to me of a way of knowing that I understood, as one caring and being cared for. In part, ‘the voice of the mother’ (Noddings, cited in Belenky *et al.*, 1986) reflected my concern to create a space in the academy to educate the whole person, acknowledging the emotional process of learning alongside the pursuit of reason and logic, the former being generally overlooked if not ignored in the androcentric order of the academy.

“Maternal practice begins in a response to the reality of a biological child in a particular social world. To be a ‘mother’ is to take upon oneself the responsibility of child care, making its work a regular and substantial part of one’s working life” (Ruddick, 1989:17).

Whilst a tutor does not share the biological bonds of a birth mother, nor the lifelong responsibility of care for the student, and whilst the role is different insofar as the higher education tutor is working with adult learners and not children, there is I suggest, for most educators, a commitment to life affirming and loving educative relations that are characteristic of maternal thinking and practice. Like children, I suggest that it is not uncommon for students to demand that a degree of preservation and growth be nurtured in their educative relations.

I first encountered the term ‘maternal thinking’ in the final chapter of Belenky *et al.* (1986:214),<sup>84</sup> which is framed with the following quotation: “It is time for the voice of the mother to be heard in education” (Noddings, cited in Belenky *et al.*, 1986). Drawing on Freire’s (1971) critique of the ‘banking’ model’ of education, Belenky *et al.* speak of the midwife teacher who, like Freire, partners their students to draw out their own knowing and speak in their own active voices, thus facilitating an emergence of consciousness about the very production of knowledge itself and their active role as knowers and creators of knowledge.

The banking model of education is problematic because the practice of presenting pre-packaged ideas to students, for example in the form of lectures and handouts prepared by the tutor, means that the tutor has done all the thinking for the students. Such methods prevent students from grappling with the subject and the sense-making process that leads to understanding and the reconfiguration of knowledge production. Indeed, they conceal from the student the very process of learning itself. This perspective reflected the values and goals for the

---

<sup>84</sup> In *Women’s Ways of Knowing*, the title of this chapter being “Connected Teaching”.

development of student autonomy in learning that had inspired the MAPOD programme.

Citing Ruddick, Belenky *et al.* (1986) introduce the term ‘maternal thinking’, linking it to their image of the midwife teacher. They identify three components of maternal thinking, preservation, support and nurturance, which the midwife teacher draws on in the service of her students. Through preservation, maternal thinking seeks to preserve the vulnerability of the child in assisting it to be ‘born with its own truth intact’. The midwife-teacher helps the student both hold on to and not lose sight of their own ideas and thinking. Secondly, maternal thinking supports the evolution of the student’s thinking, enabling them to build on what they know rather than abandoning it for the ideas/thinking of others. Thirdly, maternal thinking serves to nurture and shape the student, so that in time the student may take their own ideas and thinking into the outside world and be accepted in doing so. This type of strategy seemed to capture the way in which I had been working with Margaret (as discussed in the previous chapter) and it appeared to offer an insight as to how I could judge more effectively whether and to what degree I was creating the loving and life affirming educative relations that I espoused.

Taking Ruddick’s conception of maternal thinking as a practice, I want to suggest that by attending to student demands for preservation and growth, through a self critical reflexive inquiry, it is possible to highlight and benchmark a strategy for improving one’s practice. Ruddick (1989:13) defines practices as “collective human activities distinguished by the aims that identify them and by the consequent demands made on practitioners committed to those aims”. She identifies goals as constitutive of practice and suggests that the pursuance and evaluation of the pursuit of goals is a conscious act that involves thinking and judging. In other words, what I believe she is pointing to is a reflective process.

McMahon distinguishes between reflective practice and action research. By suggesting that the latter is distinguished by strategic action, which he defines as “a deliberate and planned attempt to solve a particular problem or set of problems using a coherent, systematic and rigorous methodology” (1999:163), whilst the former, though a useful precursor to strategic action, does not necessarily result in improvement or change. Though the outcome of reflective practice and action research may both be transformative, McMahon distinguishes between the internal process of a change in attitude and knowledge, as conceived in Kolb’s (1984) learning cycle, and the explicit nature of strategic action that changes practice itself, as conceived by the action research cycle. It was through such strategic action and change that I was looking toward the continuous improvement of my practice.

Ruddick recognises maternal thinking as a dialectical process. This is how she describes it:

“To say that thinking depends on practice means that thought is social in at least two senses. First, concepts are defined by shared aims and by rules or means for achieving those aims... Individuals nonetheless make sense of their activities to themselves by means of concepts and values that are developed socially. Thinking itself is often a solitary activity; its cooperative forms are the dialogue or conversation, not the chorus. Yet the language of solitary thinking is necessarily public in the sense that it is governed by public criteria of meaning and truth” (Ruddick, 1989:15).

It is the dialogic process of testing out one’s thinking in practice and the responses and feedback given by others that indicate whether there is shared meaning and mutual understanding of action.

## **What Evidence Can I Offer of What Maternal Thinking Means to Me in My Practice?**

The account that follows concerns the creation of a working alliance with a group of students on MAPOD 5, which began in the autumn of 1999. Unexpectedly, I find myself working with these students as their action learning set tutor, following the departure of their action learning set tutor from the programme. I provide a narrative account of my first meeting with them, after which I draw on an audiotape which captures the second meeting in February 2000.

Watson and Wilcox (2001:65) suggest a methodology for employing artefacts that “represent routine day-to-day aspects of one’s professional life”. They suggest that practitioners have “Things they do which they are so comfortable with that they have become part of their daily/weekly routine”. The ‘check-in’ is a routine that I employ at the beginning of a learning session. In this case, at the start of an action learning set meeting, before the focus of the meeting becomes task driven. With the agreement of the action learning set, I tape record these sessions as an aid to ongoing reflection and as a way of benchmarking improvements and change to my practice. In writing this piece I have also drawn on the course handbook, e-mail correspondence with students and journal writing produced at the time.

As an artefact, the tape serves to remind me of the purpose of the check-in and the values underlying this routine convention, these being to nurture a community of learners and to create what Harrison (1987) describes as ‘a safe haven’ and what hooks (1991:41) describes as “a home place and site of resistance”. She suggests that a home place is where we can be affirmed both in heart and mind, and where we can restore to ourselves the dignities denied us in the outside world.

I had been part of the tutor team for this cohort during their first residential week, leading the opening of the first dialogue for community building and introducing sessions on working with learning history and life story. These sessions are vehicles for engaging with the first assignment and are, I suggest, life-affirming methods.

“Stories and narrative, whether personal or fictional, provide meaning and belonging in our lives. They attach us to others and to our own histories by providing a tapestry rich with threads of time, place, character, and even advice on what we might do with our lives” (Witherell and Noddings, 1991).

Knowing ourselves as learners is one of the purposes of the first module.<sup>85</sup> The assignment requirements outlined in the course handbook state:

“To prepare and present in action learning sets, a critical review of a personal learning experience or activity, and a analysis of the associate learning support strategies. This is to be presented in the form of a seminar paper, circa 3,000 to 5,000 words”.

The format for set meetings to produce such an assignment is usually three sessions. The first being to explore a proposed issue for reflection or research and identify some criteria as a basis for assessment; the second, to present and critique work in progress; and the third, to review the finished piece and present it for assessment, which is self, peer and tutor moderated. Whilst I was not a stranger to this set, I had not developed a personal working relationship with them, and as a result of the sudden and unexpected departure of their tutor there had not been time to be briefed in detail about the students, their proposed assignments, their process or the relationships and dynamics within the set.

---

<sup>85</sup> Entitled “Individual learning and support strategies”.

## **Background to the Second Meeting: My First Encounter With the Set in December**

Revisiting my journal, written a day or so after this initial meeting with this set, I recall the following details. The meeting was to be held at the home of one of the students in the set, so I telephoned Marcia the evening before to let her know that their tutor was unable to come and that I was stepping in. I explained that she had been forced to withdraw due to ill health and increased pressures of work. I acknowledged that this was unfortunate, but that these circumstances had not been foreseen and that I would explain more fully to everyone tomorrow. Marcia was very understanding, expressed concern for the tutor and offered to telephone the other set members to let them know what was happening in advance of the meeting. The meeting was scheduled between 10am and 3pm, whilst Marcia's children were at school.

The set consisted of three women and one man. The man and one of the women were a couple both working for the same bank, the woman in a management development role and the man in a senior management post. Marcia was working as a health visitor and the other woman worked for a health authority in an organisation development role. Marcia had coffee waiting for us and had prepared a lunch.

They had all come prepared, having done some writing as I had been briefed to expect. But what I did not expect, and which became apparent very quickly, was that rather than bringing their writing as work in progress to be shared with the set, open to critique and revision/development, it was being presented to me as a finished draft. The expectation of the set members was that I (the tutor) would read and comment on each piece of work and indicate whether it was good enough to pass.



There is an air of anxiety that I conform to this expectation and so I do. I experience a sense of perturbation as I proceed to read each piece of work. Without having any prior sense of what to expect, I find it impossible to skim read, something I know my colleague, their former tutor, is good at. I feel obliged to read each piece closely to get a sense of what they have written. This is time consuming. As I read I clarify in my own mind that I am looking for coherence of a story that in some way addresses their experience as learner and shows evidence of engagement with relevant literature that informs or illuminates their storied account and insights of themselves as learner and knower. I share this with them. Not everyone has brought a copy of their assignment for other set members to read, and two people have only brought copies for me. My unease is exacerbated as I realise that there is a high degree of tutor dependency and expectation.

As we address each piece in the order agreed, I invite the author to 'talk us in' to their story/account in order to create a more vivid picture of the issues and questions that have been drawn out by their reflections and writing. I try to encourage their peers into conversation about the qualities of each piece of work, asking what struck them about the piece and what resonated with their experience and thinking. The responses are minimal and reflect the fact that not all members of the set have read the piece or had time to engage with it. At this stage, there is no mention of any set criteria, or suggestion that my reading contradicts any expectation they might have.

By lunch-time we were behind schedule. Time was running short when we turned our attention to Nigel's work. He had written over 40 pages, spanning the last 25 years from the point of leaving school, beginning with his first job in the bank machine room to his current role in senior management, and the use of a 360 degree feedback appraisal system in use at the bank. Its length overwhelmed me. I noted that although the storied account was fulsome, there was very little

use of literature and no clear analysis or critique of his experience. I felt that he still had work to do before it would be ready for submission and assessment.

I suggested he do two things: 1) cut back on the overall length, reducing the scope of his piece (so he could do more with less) and 2) engage with some relevant literature. I made some suggestions about what texts he might consider that seemed relevant to his account. Similar feedback was echoed by Marcia. Nigel however, seemed surprised and unhappy about this feedback and suggested that as far as he was concerned he had completed the task. He indicated that in his opinion it was good enough and believed it should warrant a pass. He raised several objections to doing any more work on the grounds of lack of time and not yet having a library card. Whilst two of the set members rummaged for books to give him, I reminded him gently that we had given out a number of handouts during the residential that he could also look at.

I recognised this scenario as one that I had encountered previously with mature students without prior higher education qualifications, so I said something about a balance of theory and practice in writing and how we can use literature to throw light on and extend our understanding of our experience. Marcia's children had come home from school and it was time to go.

We said our goodbyes. As I made my way to my car I was aware that the other three students were gathered around one their cars in what looked like a post-mortem. I resisted the temptation to go over and engage them in discussion. I had a splitting headache. I walked to my car and drove home.

### **The Second Meeting (February)**

The date for the assessment meeting had already been fixed by the set. Unfortunately, I was only available for the morning as I had a hospital

appointment that afternoon and given diary commitments other set members indicated that there was no possibility of an alternative date. This was far from ideal but the assessment needed to be completed by the next residential, so we agreed to work with it.

The assignments arrived at the end of January, the weekend prior to the meeting. I read them and prepared two statements of feedback for each student. The first addressing the qualities of their work, focusing on what they had written and the other focused on developing their writing and engagement with the literature in the future. This was purposeful in that I was trying to do what a 'connected teacher' would do, that is firstly, focus on a appreciative response to an individual's writing and only thereafter offer formative feedback for their future development.

Nonetheless, from my perspective, Nigel's work remained a problem. There was still little evidence of engagement with literature, and the changes he had made to his account were minimal. It was not yet a pass. I was worried about how he would deal with this. I was aware that I had ultimate responsibility as the tutor for ensuring that standards which constitute Masters level work were met. I was curious to see what his peers would say, and if they had found merit in his work that I had missed. I was willing to change my mind if persuasive evidence were produced. I was conscious that I was trying to balance the need to uphold standards of a Masters degree and at the same time support Nigel's personal development. This did not feel comfortable.

Despite the holistic learning and development opportunities that the MAPOD programme aimed to provide, our efforts were constrained by the organisation of the modular framework, where students had to produce each assignment at Masters level before moving on to the next module. This seemed to get in the way of the natural process of learning and development for some students

causing much anxiety, and which created in some cases an approach to learning described by Biggs (1989) as an ‘achieving approach’. This is where the motivation is to make the grade and the learning strategy is to optimise the organisation of time and study skills. This is in contrast to the ‘deep’ approach to learning that we were aiming for on MAPOD. Nigel’s approach seemed to me to be characteristic of an achieving strategy.

*The tape captures the assessment meeting for this assignment*

The students provide their own alternative to the koosh (a talking stick) in the form of a cuddly toy, which causes much amusement, and we open the meeting with a check-in. I am composing myself, honing my attention toward the needs of the students, before we begin the apparent ‘business’ – the educative task of the day.

Nigel was the first to take the koosh. He outlines his concern about how the last session ended and describes feeling “left up in the air and disappointed”. He asks how I saw the day going, and he says for him it is important to establish what I expected from them since they had been “set up to work one way with the other tutor”. He also wanted to know if my expectations would be different from hers. He announced that “we have had a conversation” (referring to two of his peers) and acknowledged that he had not yet spoken to Marcia, the other set member. I was then asked if I had seen the learning set contract, to which I replied “no”. He continues with how that disappoints him and suggests that we might have wasted some time. He suggests a degree of uncertainty and poses the question of how I want to be involved with the group. He then asks for clarification about the situation regarding the other tutor.

I sensed an alliance of three, and his choice of language seemed to place me on the outside of the set.

Y (Nigel's partner) then takes the koosh and begins by saying that she is feeling positive about her assignment and wants to move on to the next assignment. However, she too appears to be disappointed that I have not seen their learning contract. She refers to the assessment criteria they have seemingly established in the set and states that she has used it as the basis for giving feedback. She also wonders whether there are differences with the way I "administer a set" compared with the way the other tutor does. I feel more uncomfortable when I hear the word 'administer' and wonder what is understood by the facilitation of learning. She continues by describing how she felt for Nigel and says that if she had been him she would have gone away and seriously considered not completing the course.

Returning to her own assignment, she comments on how she saw the assignment as a learning process and that it was for her an emotional time, writing it. Now she wanted to put it behind her and look forward.

Marcia then takes the koosh. She says that at the moment she is feeling positive and sees today as a small part of the process. She says that she had felt the need to telephone Nigel after the last meeting and check out how he was feeling. Personally, she feels she got a lot out of that meeting, but suggests we think about how to structure and run this meeting. She elaborates that she has also gained a lot out of this assignment and that it has helped put behind her a very damaging experience in her previous role.

Z then takes the koosh. She describes frustration and anger, saying that she did not get too much out of it, that we ran out of time and we should address the structure of the meeting. Turning to her own assignment she says she views it as the foundation without which she could not imagine doing the rest of the course.

She reiterates her apprehension. She believes that the group has achieved a lot, having rallied in response to Nigel's feedback.

The koosh is then passed to me. I begin by acknowledging that we only have until 1.30. I say that feedback is often difficult for everybody, that it can be difficult to 'hear' feedback and I suggest that feedback about the piece of work is not the same as feedback or criticism about the person. I flag feedback as one of the concerns that I want to work with today.

I make two additional points regarding feedback, the first being it is not only my responsibility, and the second that there are two aspects to feedback, the developmental and the academic. I confess that I am feeling a little anxious too, but say that I want to use that anxiety constructively with the set so that it can positively enhance their learning experience.

I offer to clarify the situation regarding the other tutor. I return to the suggestion of implied difference between the way I am working and their experience of the other tutor, framing the question "what are you hearing that is different from me that the other tutor has said?".

The first thing we address is the situation with the other tutor. The set have heard another story of why she left and seek clarification. Whilst what they have heard is true, I feel that it is inappropriate for me to discuss the detail of it with them. The explanation I had given them was true but neither was it the whole story. I had agreed with the tutor and our line manager that the students on this cohort did not need to know the whole story, as it did not directly affect them. There was, however, a tension between this need to know approach and their espoused expectations to be told the full story and in their words "be treated as adults". I tell them that I see no reason to spoil what appeared to have been a positive working relationship with the other tutor by revealing to them an unpleasant

incident that had occurred with another cohort. I suggest that we handle this situation no differently from how their organisations would handle a similar scenario, and I add that not everything is thrown open to the public domain. They nod but I can feel that there is unease.

I suggest we move on to look at the assessment criteria, framing again the question “what could be so different between the way I work and the way the other tutor worked with you?”. Nigel responds, “when we started to build a learning relationship with X she said: ‘there is nothing I will not do personally to help you get through this M.A., my commitment to you is total, I will do everything I possibly can to get you through this’”. Nigel reveals that for him this was positive. Now, he did not know what the future held, he comments on the lack of time he had in his session and concludes by saying: “Personally I didn’t feel that your commitment was the same from you to me”.

Silence.

I acknowledge that what he has said is important and I write down time and commitment. Nigel is poised to continue. He says: “If I had delivered the message you had given to me... I walked away and was in two minds whether to carry on... I can take feedback, I’ve had loads of feedback, some positive, some negative in my career but I’ve used it to my advantage. What I was disappointed about there was no follow up, whether that’s your style you want to develop.”

I ask if he wants to say any more about what he means by “no follow up”. Returning to X’s commitment to him of “I’ll get you through”, he says he did not feel able to pick up the phone to me as he would have done with her. He said he felt that he had been on the right lines with her, which was not the message he subsequently got from me. He then made it clear that he had expected me to call

him, to check whether there was anything he wanted clarification on and to talk about it.

I respond, saying “I am still struggling with what it is that’s different about what *X* and I say about what is expected”. Nigel says it’s not the content of what we are saying but the fact that he feels he has not had a “steer” from me.

Surprised by this, I suggest that I thought I had given a very clear steer. Several members of the set join in, suggesting that there is a difference between hearing the message and testing it out. I apologise that the message was heard and felt to have nothing in it that was constructive, reiterating the two points (cutting down and literature work) that I had given as a steer.

*Y* says that she heard some of the positives in the message and also recognised that he had got hung up on the word ‘rewrite’. She describes how she discussed this with him, persuading him not to leave.

I sense that now is a good time to clarify expectations about writing at Masters level. *Y* outlines the detail of the assessment criteria they had agreed with the other tutor, and there does not appear to be major differences in our approach. I sense that we have almost completed the first stage of the meeting, airing and resolving unfinished business.

It is now 10.30 and I suggest we clarify “where we are now as a set” and use the koosh to conduct a ‘round robin’ to check out how each person feels and whether we are ready to move on. The consensus is that everyone is feeling happier that we have invested time to reflect on our experience of working together, and are agreed that we are now ready to move on.



## **The Assessment**

We allocate the remainder of the morning to the assessment process, giving everyone an equal chunk of time and I frame how we might do this, starting with self presentation, followed by peer and tutor feedback. When Nigel's turn comes, I am not persuaded that I have overlooked anything of substantial merit to change my perspective. Nigel is asked to do some additional literature work. Following the meeting there is much e-mail correspondence between us clarifying the role and use of literature in relation to his narrative account.

So, what is going on here? How can I/we make sense of my practice and, more importantly, of my claims of maternal thinking in the teaching-learning relationship? What I hear on the tape suggests that the students do not see or experience me as one caring. This is particularly so for Nigel. Yet I am trying to convince you, that I am caring and engaged in a process of maternal thinking with these students.

## *Reciprocity*

Noddings (1984) suggests that an ethic of care is the "aspiration or ideal" of one caring and one cared for. Caring is, she suggests, a process of reciprocity. I wonder if Nigel's comments and stated expectations of me are reflective of his ideals, in other words what he understand to be the aspiration of one caring and one cared for. This casts his 'criticism' of me in a different light; rather than taking it personally, I can see that I do not live up to his ideal.

Noddings describes the non-rational nature of caring and argues that, for example, a child needs enduring, irrational involvement with adults, the 'irrational' being tantamount to being 'crazy' about that child! There is some similarity here to Roger's (1967) notion of 'unconditional positive regard'.

### *Attitude*

I am sure that Nigel has not experienced me as feeling ‘crazy’ about him. There is a world of difference about how I feel toward Nigel and how I feel toward my son, who I am crazy about. Recognising this, I wonder what it means to care enough; in other words, to be a ‘good enough mother’ in my educative relations?

### *Receptivity*

Reflecting on my action/practice, I can see and appreciate both points of view, mine and Nigel’s.

### *Awareness*

Noddings describes a process of awareness of the construction and acceptance of one’s constrained ideal. This, I suggest, is similar to Whitehead’s theory of knowing oneself as a living contradiction, which involves sensing a gap between one’s espoused theory and theory in use:

“All I am meaning by ‘I’ as a living contradiction is the experience of holding together two mutually exclusive opposite values” (Whitehead, 2000:93).

Noddings suggests that the contradiction may manifest itself as a ‘both and’ position: “a turning toward and a turning away” at the same time. Antagonism, for example, defies receptivity and responsiveness, and I had experienced Nigel as antagonistic.

In explaining the constraints that may undermine one’s ideal of care, Noddings suggests that burnout may be one of the causes. Whatever the reason, there has been a failure in my receptivity toward Nigel. Noddings suggests that the tension

between constraints and attainment that get in the way of one caring cause the one caring to look inside herself as she relates to the other in an acceptance of one's constrained ideal. This is similar to Whitehead's idea that when we experience ourselves as living contradictions we imagine a way forward to improve our practice. The 'both and' position helps me hold at one and the same time our different perspectives, whilst turning my attention toward Nigel, listening to what he has to say, and adjusting my stance as one caring closer toward his ideal. Listening and dialogue play, according to Noddings, a key role in nurturing the ethical ideal of care.

Enhancement of the ethical ideal involves dialogue, practice and confirmation. The check-in provides an opportunity for dialogue (facilitating a free flow of meaning between us). The 'round robin' provides an opportunity to check understanding, also whether there has been a change in knowledge or attitude by or between all members (students and tutor) of the set. Additionally, it serves to gauge the possibility of enhancing the ethical ideal.

Noddings examines what it means to care and be cared for, how care for another person relates to the larger moral picture and how caring ultimately functions in an educational context. Noddings builds a compelling argument for ethics based on natural caring, a feminine view constituted in maternal thinking and rooted in receptivity, relatedness and responsiveness.

Though I acknowledge the constraints of the modular system and the tension it can create between a deep and achieving approach to learning, hindering the development of some and resulting in 'the tail wagging the dog', my approach has been to work with these constraints on the basis that students have opted to do the MAPOD programme principally because it offers them a Masters level qualification. Furthermore, I believe that their sponsors would be unlikely to pay for the course if it were merely seen to be a personal development experience.

Consequently, when it has been suggested that I have been hard on the students or insensitive to their feelings, I have justified my approach as one caring, in the sense of 'being cruel to be kind'. But I argue that they would not thank me, if at the end of the year they were assessed by the examination board as having developed only to postgraduate diploma standard when they thought they were heading for a Masters level award. This approach as one caring is akin to Ruddick's (1989:21) conception of the mother "shaping the child's natural growth". As well as demands for preservation and growth, Ruddick tells us that maternal work (and by implication maternal thinking) also demands social acceptability:

"A mother's group is that set of people with whom she identifies to the degree that she would count failure to meet their criteria of acceptability as her failure" (Ruddick, 1989:21).

What I am suggesting I am doing as one caring, is to facilitate the learning and development of these students in a way that ultimately achieves the social acceptance of what being a Masters level student accords.

I accept that to conform to the social conventions of the academy in this regard may not be the position that others would choose to take, or that everyone will see it as 'one caring', but it has been my position regarding this matter on MAPOD, and one that I have adopted following several reflective conversations I have had with colleagues and examiners regarding this dilemma. Had we not agreed to design the programme broadly within the modular framework, we were told that the political will was such that the course would not have been validated.

Ashcroft and Foreman-Peck emphasise that a critical stance towards reflective practice goes beyond reflection and critique of one's own practice but includes

“the social, moral, and political context for that practice” (1994:3). Whilst I have been critical of what I have called the androcentric order of the academy and have been prepared to push for changes such as allowing students to write in the first person, and have pushed the educational reasons for this, I have done so not only because they support my underlying educational values but also because I felt that the path of resistance, though problematic, has not been so entrenched as the attachment to the current modular frameworks seems to be.

Modular frameworks and their associated credit accumulation are essentially a product of the commodification of higher education. A module packages the learning into bite size chunks and may demand that learning outcomes be specified in advance. Whilst this approach may make pre-packaged tutor directed learning more efficient, it narrows the scope for self-directed learning, although there may well be ways of working with these tensions that are more creative and provide more scope for the natural development of the learning process than the way in which we have designed the MAPOD programme. I have wondered whether a portfolio of work assessed at the end of the first and second year of the programme might be a better way, but this would involve separating the credit points from the module and attaching them to an award, with a specified number of credits for postgraduate certificate, diploma and Masters levels. This is a bigger issue than my practice improvement, as it is conditional on educating and changing the social formation.

Boud (2002)<sup>86</sup> took the theme that assessment hurts. He has a point. Although I have tried to live by the maxim ‘do no harm’, this example shows that Nigel and the other students did not experience me as one caring. Good intent to care was not enough. So what was missing in the learning relationship? Perhaps my attitude failed to convey my intent, or perhaps reciprocity was absent? Perhaps to

---

<sup>86</sup> David Boud, in his Professorial inaugural lecture at the School of Life Long Learning, at Middlesex University, January 2002.

be judged as one caring can only be recognised where commitment to loving and life affirming educative relations is experienced over time? But I also wonder if the students concerned expected a more formative process than the modular system allows? It was perhaps no coincidence that the students who formed an alliance of three all joined the programme as mature students without prior higher education qualifications. Perhaps the system itself has inherent contradictions where on the one hand there is a policy of open access, supported by a commitment to equal opportunities and the management of student intake in a highly competitive higher education market and, on the other hand, the demands of a modular system that require the student to attain a given standard at 'M' level before progressing to the next module. Prior to the modular system, students may have benefited from the flexibility of the integrated programme that allowed more time over the life of the programme for them to attain the level required. It is in this latter context of an educative programme that formative assessment can make a difference. Perhaps more fundamentally, as Kegan (1994:286) has suggested, we need to problematise what we mean by self-directed learning. He argues that we need to be more cautious about legislating for student autonomy in learning, pointing out that students may not have the skills to be self-directing (this would include emotional and social skills, as well as intellectual skills).

"Intellectual disciplines or fields of study are neither repositories of discovered facts or families of related opinions. They are each-be they in the sciences, social sciences, or humanities - systematic procedures for generating and evaluating ideas, hypothesis, and 'sincere opinions'. They are public procedures for relating to third order constructions. Taking charge of a discipline, as higher education asks its students to do, requires of them more than just the 'personal' sophistication of 'self-direction'. It requires the cognitive sophistication to construct complex systems, the structure of the fourth order" (Kegan, 1994:286).

In terms of the perspectives of Belenky *et al.* (1986), this involves a shift in mind from subjective knowing and procedural knowing to constructed knowing, if

students are to truly develop the skills of self-direction as demanded by the academy, rather than just on their own terms.

Taking on board Kegan's criticisms, I am led to conclude that any attempt to benchmark the skills of maternal thinking and judging, in other words what it means to be a 'good enough' mother (Winnicott, 1971) is itself problematic. Clearly it is not a formulaic heuristic. Winnicott suggested that the 'good enough' mother is able to hold the paradox inherent in the use of a transitional object, one example being a dummy in replacement for the breast. By doing this she manages to neither confirm nor refute the child's reality as gradually she introduces an external reality to the child, by way of weaning him or her onto solids. This gradual introduction of an external reality enables the child to deal better with the disappointment of its needs not being met. Bolingbroke (2000), in her MAPOD dissertation entitled "From POD Child to Adult Academy", suggests that:

"Extending the analogy to the context of assessment, the 'good enough' tutor or peer assessors similarly hold the paradox between feedback and judgment and do not challenge the learner's conception of the inner and outer realities of their developing intellectual paradigm" (2000:66).

Furthermore, Bolingbroke suggests that the 'good enough' tutor will not only know when to challenge the 'reality' of the learner, but that she will be skilful in this regard.

"Just as the mother learns with the child, the optimum pace of this illusion/disillusionment, the tutor/ peers have to get to know the student over time to successfully hold this paradox so that students can learn from assessment and not see assessment as a barrier to learning" (2000:67).

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, I suggest that if we are to utilise heuristic maternal thinking as a vehicle for facilitating loving and life-affirming educative relations, we (the tutors) must first understand the complexities of what we in academia mean by self-directed learning and the mental demands this places on the student. Only then can maternal thinking provide a viable heuristic for the reflective practitioner and educational action researcher helping support effective teaching and learning relationships over time. It requires that tutors think through and judge their educative strategies and choices in a manner that is critically reflexive of both one's own practice and the social and political context of the educative environment. This is crucial if we are to realise the ethical ideal of care in the teaching and learning relationship.

In this chapter, I have introduced the idea of maternal thinking as a transformative discourse for educative relations, which can support the practice of a tutor whose goals are to facilitate life affirming and loving educative relations. But I have to conclude that this is subject to the tutor appreciating the complexities that self-directed learning demands. I have explained how I adopted the idea of maternal thinking into my practice by drawing on an artefact of my practice: the routine use of a 'check-in' in the teaching and learning process as a tool for reflecting on and gauging the learning climate of individuals and the group, and of the teaching and learning relationship itself. Subsequently, I have given a critical account of myself as one caring, accounting for my thinking and judgment in respect of practice and I have explored my practice within the dialogic relationships of tutor and student, and the political context of the modular framework identifying the constraints this places on my practice and goals for learning.



The ideas presented in this chapter were tested out in the form of a conference paper (Hartog, 2002).<sup>87</sup> Feedback from conference participants who expressed an interest in my paper have been incorporated into this account. In particular, Professor Jona Rosenfeld<sup>88</sup> wrote to me encouraging me to think beyond seeing my failure to achieve my ethical ideal in my learning relationship with Nigel as a living contradiction. Rather, he pointed me toward seeing the complexities of the relationship, which I now see inherent in the components of maternal thinking which hitherto I had missed.

---

<sup>87</sup> Paper also presented at the Second Carfax International Conference on Reflective Practice in July 2000.

<sup>88</sup> One of the authors of *Artisans of Democracy*, which I have already described in Chapter Two (page 85).

***PART THREE: TOWARD A  
HUMANE AND CRITICAL  
SCHOLARSHIP OF PRACTICE***

## **CHAPTER NINE: DEVELOPING A CONNOISSEUR'S EYE: EXPLORING THE AESTHETICS OF MY TEACHING AND LEARNING RELATIONSHIPS ON MAPOD**

In this chapter I aim to test my claim to originality described in my abstract as “embodied in the aesthetics of my teaching and learning relationships, as I learn to respond to the humanity of my students and their educative needs, listen to their stories and find an ethic of care that contains them in good company, returning them to their stories as more complete human beings”. It is about showing my values in action; in other words, the ideas and embodied nature of my values that constitute loving and life-affirming educational practice.

In doing so, I respond to Eisner's (1997) injunction to use alternative forms of representation to explore this phenomenon by drawing on visual evidence contained in video clips of my practice and on narrative accounts to illuminate the qualities that have been experienced. In explaining and presenting what I do in these teaching and learning relationships, I also draw on ideas in constructivist and interpretivist approaches to human inquiry (Schwandt, 1994) as a means to help construct and explain the qualities of my own ‘living theory’ (Whitehead, 1989) as embodied in my practice.

Whitehead suggests that visual forms of representation may overcome the constraints of text-bound accounts of action research and illuminate values in action:

“One of the constraints on developing dialectical forms of representation of educational and curriculum theories could be the text-bound nature of much educational research and theorising. It could be that a breakthrough in dialectical forms of representation is imminent in the recent developments in image-based research (Prosser, 1998), where the meanings of values, such as freedom, respect, care, love and compassion can

be shown in the process of their emergence in practice... These multi-media forms of representation may help curriculum action researchers to show the meanings of the values which are embodied in their educative relationships" (Whitehead, 1999:80).

In exploring the aesthetics of my teaching and learning relationships, I will begin by outlining the tenets of those propositional theories that inform my understanding of what I do, and then examine the presentational forms contained in the video clips to illuminate, interpret and appraise the qualities of my practice that I describe in my living theory explanations. In particular, I will draw on video material that shows me working with Louise and Margaret (students on MAPOD 4), and Marcia and Sue (students on MAPOD 5). By drawing on these visual images of my practice, I aim to illuminate and support my claims to contain them in good company and to return them to their stories as more complete human beings. I want to describe this process as one of collaborative co-authoring in which *I take my lead from them* in the facilitation of their learning journey, as I work with them individually and alongside their peers toward a process of coherence and clarification of their own narrative accounts.

In this thesis I have suggested that one of my values is to honour the experience that students bring with them. Indeed, the experience that I have in mind is in respect of lived experience; in other words, life learning and not just work experience. In this regard they are the experts and I am the learner, and as such I approach their stories and every learning conversation from a position of genuine interest and curiosity and, like Anderson and Goolishian (1992), from a perspective of *not knowing*, thus being open to new possibilities emerging in the stories told and lived.

## Introduction

Interpretivist thinking is concerned with “grasping or understanding the meaning of social phenomena” (Schwandt, 1994:119). What I am concerned to grasp and bring to light in this account are the aesthetic qualities of my teaching and learning relationships in the context of MAPOD, as I learn to develop a connoisseur’s eye and develop my own artistry in facilitating the process of narrative accounting in student learning. I want to suggest that this artistry is central to my inquiry, as I seek to live my values in action and keep in mind questions of the kind “How do I improve my practice?”. By drawing on ontological hermeneutics, I accept that we are constrained by our language and history, and it is these limits that make the process of meaning construction hermeneutical. Interpretation is thus conditional to human inquiry and not merely a methodological option. Interpretivism holds that “human behaviour is purposive” and suggests that:

“Social agents are considered autonomous, intentional, active, goal directed: they construe, construct, and interpret their own behaviour and that of their fellow agents” (Schwandt, 1994:120).

It is these qualities of agency that are being exercised by my students as they seek to construct accounts of their own knowing through their assignments and dissertations on MAPOD, and in my role as educator I seek to facilitate them in the production of coherent accounts. Schwandt (1994:121) tells us that a “hermeneutical undertaking is analogous to the interpretation of a text”; in other words, a reading of the social situation, in which the interpreter participates in the production of meaning via participation in the *circle of readings or interpretations*.

It is this sense of the hermeneutic circle of meaning that I want to suggest provides a helpful way of thinking about the qualities of my facilitation as I help

students search for meaningful constructions within their own assignments. I help them toward a construction of the whole in relation to the parts, through listening carefully to their telling and retellings, and responding to their storied accounts.

The concept of 'educational connoisseurship' is grounded in the "consummatory function" of aesthetic knowing - "the developed ability to experience the subtleties of form" (Eisner, 1985:28, cited in Schwandt, 1994:129). Schwandt tells us that the connoisseur perceives and/or experiences qualities in the sensory features of a phenomena, and these are not merely impressions, but more specifically a perceptual and cognitive framework, enabling the connoisseur to develop:

"...a kind of heightened awareness or educated perception - a particular kind of attention to nuance and detail, to multiple dimensions or aspects - that comes from the intimate familiarity with the phenomenon being examined" (Schwandt, 1994:129).

Polanyi (1962:54) suggests that connoisseurship can only be demonstrated by example and not precept. He argues that skill and connoisseurship come as much from the art of doing as knowing. Taking the medical practitioner as an example, Polanyi suggests that the recognition of symptoms comes through repeatedly learning from cases where the symptom is known to be authoritatively present, side by side with cases where it is known to be absent.

Similarly, educative connoisseurship, I suggest, develops over time as the practitioner learns to attend to individual cases, recognising not only common learning problems but also the unique difficulties experienced by individual students and gaining familiarity with their case histories in the course of the learning relationship.

It is the paradox of this intimate knowledge of individual learning and development histories, combined with not knowing how their particular storied accounts might unfold, that in my view heightens the senses. In the case of my students, the phenomenon being examined is their narrative account of lived experience, embracing their personal and professional learning histories, linked to their particular MAPOD enquiries.

Their narrative accounts represent an expression or a reconstitution of their lived experience. In facilitating this, I am concerned with the production and process of their enquiries, enabled by an aesthetic appreciation of and familiarity with the intimacies, details and nuances of their stories, over time. The video clips provide a glimpse of my developing connoisseur's eye, as I come to better know the intimacies of my own practice in my learning relationships with them, and in the process develop a more reflective, appreciative and critical stance toward it. Although it cannot show you my embodied knowledge, perhaps it can point toward the values that guide my knowing in action.

### **In the Context of MAPOD**

*The learning relationship on MAPOD* is organised in a way that allows individuals to present their individual experience and understanding(s) of those experiences within the frame of reference of their individual enquiries. The learning relationship is organised in the social context of the action learning set, where individuals present their problems posing agendas in the company of their peers and, in some cases, in a one-to-one conversation with a tutor.

*The taken for granted* is that each person brings a life perspective and the skills of sense making and meaning generation to these learning conversations. It is through the processes of social construction and dialogue that understanding and meaning emerges, giving meaning and organisation to lived experience.

Furthermore, it is in this understanding of narrative reality that human action takes place and where the capacity for human agency may be either enhanced or diminished. The MAPOD as an educational developmental programme serves to develop the human potential of individual actors in the context of personal, professional and organisational learning. Organisations exist within the wider social sphere and the working lives of employees are not solely contained within the organisation; rather, the organisation impinges and draws on the life world of the individual, and is itself a product of the wider social system.

Communicative action, meaning generating discourse and dialogue, occurs within the social, organisational and educational systems, and is shaped by the conventions of those systems and their perceived functions and purposes. The narratives told by individuals in these systems will either enhance or inhibit personal perceptions of competence, freedom and agency to act. The educational arena can provide a space in which a more critical discourse can emerge, as a means to facilitate the competence of the individual and in so doing enhance their sense of personal and professional empowerment. Thus, as my practice has evolved in the context of MAPOD, I am concerned to facilitate:

- a problem posing and critical space;
- the development of voice and mind;
- the process of personal and organisational learning and change; and
- the education of the social formation in both the academy and the particular practice context of the students.

*The dynamics of the action learning process* create a context for reflective 'learning' conversations, and these involve a mutual search and exploration through dialogue. Such conversations facilitate the emergence of different perspectives in a free flow of ideas, which in turn enable new meanings and understandings to continuously emerge and evolve. It is through these socially



reconstructed meanings that voice and mind may be reclaimed and through which our meanings and perspectives may change. As the action learning set and the tutor facilitator listen to the stories told, the question is always being asked “What is going on here?”. Citing Geertz, Schwandt (1994:123) puts it more bluntly, saying “the trick is to figure out what the devil they think they are up to”. It is in response to this process of social inquiry that either support or challenge is presented to the narrative, as participants draw out collaboratively the coherence and truth of the story told. In this sense the action learning set functions like a reflecting team, providing feedback and monitoring of the story told, generating new ideas and possibilities for interpretation, the purpose of which, is to help the individual consider their position (account) by increasing the range of options available to them. Anderson and Goolishian (1992) refer to the conversation as a linguistic event in which new meanings are continually evolving.

“Learning then, is the generation of new knowledge through conversation. By conversation, we mean a generative conversation, a dialogue in which there is a ‘talking with’, a co-exploration that leads to the co-development of alternative views, new learning and solutions” (Anderson and Swim, 1993:146).

The reflecting team shares with the humanistic co-operative inquiry model (Reason, 1988) its three characteristics of participatory and holistic knowing, critical subjectivity and knowledge in action, both recognising the multiversity, reflexivity and the emergent process of inquiry and learning.

*The tutor role*, as I see it, is that of conversational artist or connoisseur of the dialogical process, whose expertise and authority is concerned with the creation of a space to facilitate a dialogic conversation. I am not claiming it is my job to ‘create change’ in a individual, rather, to facilitate the dialogic creation of new narratives. The tutor is in one sense a participant observer and thus a ‘part’

facilitator of this learning conversation. As participant observer, I pay particular attention to the holistic sense of the narrative account, reflecting and clarifying the shared meanings and understandings of the parts in relation to the whole. I am also part of the process I seek to observe as a self-reflective inquirer of my own living theory and, as such, I try to be mindful of my own feeling, bias and potential for prejudice in the meaning constructions that I contribute, and to those that may emerge from other participants in the process. I am acutely aware of my own humanity, in that I am not infallible, and consequently experience myself in the course of conversation as a 'living contradiction', in other words "holding educational values whilst at the same time negating them" (Whitehead, 1989:45). The artistry is then in the exercise of my inquiry, as I observe the process of conversation of which I am a part by:

- questioning and probing the speaker for clarification of their account;
- formulating tentative hypotheses of the narrative account(s);
- testing out of these hypotheses, both my own and those shared with other participants in the action learning set;
- gathering the fragments or parts of the narrative account, feeding it back to the individual and the set in relation to the whole; and
- drawing out the narrative account through the circle of meaning that is co-created.

When I speak of collaborative co-authoring, I am referring to the sense making that arises out of this dialogical process, in the form of narrative evolution. This process of inquiring hypothesising serves to reorganise information and generate further information. Its primary concern is to help make sense of a situation, rather than with the truth or falsity of a claim; however, the 'truth' may unravel in the process as the narrative account is constructed with more coherence. This process of inquiring hypothesising is how I claim *to do* inquiry with my students in the teaching and learning relationship, and in the process develop my

connoisseur's eye, as I respond to my living inquiry of continuous practice improvement.

*Distress and development* are tensions that have to be worked with in narrative inquiries. The MAPOD process of narrative accounting seeks to address the personal, professional and organisational in relation to one another. Reason and Marshall (1987:115)<sup>89</sup> forewarn us of the potential for past distresses to emerge in the course of an inquiry, and they reinforce this message in their more recent writings on working with reference to several students.

“From this view of individual psychological development, we argue that researchers often choose (consciously or unconsciously) research topics which will re-stimulate old patterns of distress, and invite a renewed attention to restrictive patterns: it is as if we are not content with our distorted experience and behavior” (Reason and Marshall, 2001:414).

They further suggest that if the tendency toward defensiveness can be avoided the student may be able to “transcend this re-stimulated distress” and the response may be “creative and developmental” (ibid.). What they recommend is a systematic discipline or practice that enables the student to explore how their unaware distress distorts their inquiry. Furthermore, they suggest that the action reflection cycles of inquiry, supported by the reflections of a supportive group of peers, can provide such a discipline. It is precisely such a critical reflective posture that the action learning set and tutor-facilitator bring to the conversation, which in turn can facilitate empowerment. Ghaye describes empowerment in the following way:

“Empowerment is about individuals and groups coming to know, express and critically analyse their own realities and having the commitment will and power to act to transform these realities to enhance personal and collective well being, security, satisfaction and working conditions” (2000:79).

---

<sup>89</sup> In “Research as a personal process”.

Distress may reveal a sense of *incompleteness* to oneself as a human being.

Freire<sup>90</sup> asserts that humanisation is man's central concern. He says:

"Within history, in concrete, objective contexts, both humanisation and dehumanisation are possibilities for man as an uncompleted being conscious of his incompleteness. [Humanisation he argues, is] ...thwarted by injustice, exploitation, oppression, and the violence of oppressors; it is affirmed by the yearning of the oppressed for freedom and justice, and by their struggle to recover their lost humanity" (1972:20).

Although I had read Freire's work, I did not appreciate the significance of the notion of man as an uncompleted human being conscious of his incompleteness, until Louise, one of my MAPOD students (a mature student in her mid-fifties), used this quote in the framing of her dissertation. Louise had been exploring the utility of a change intervention called 'Future Search' as a possible vehicle for facilitating community voice in the London Borough of Newham, where she worked as a training manager. She had prepared a first draft of her dissertation and had asked me to go through it with her to check for coherence and understanding. Reading aloud her introduction, so that I could listen for clarity, she introduced the quotation by saying:

"While the subject matter of this study is focused on Future Search, this section starts by explaining the significance of undertaking an M.A. and my journey as a life long learner.

This quote describes my journey as a learner from my first years in school until now as I think and write this MA dissertation. The human mind is what distinguishes us from other forms of life, the ability to draw on a wide range of flexible responses to think creatively, to draw on emotion and access the soul. The mind is precious, an obvious statement, but one worth re-stating within this particular context. If formal education is the vehicle that assists 'people to be more fully human' this was not the case in my formative years. In fact, I was less able to think in certain areas, less certain of myself, after only the first few years in school that was to determine the

---

<sup>90</sup> In the introduction to *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*.

next twenty years of my life. I would go as far as saying that this early experience was like having my mind interfered with. This may seem a dramatic description of what is, after all, many young people's experience of learning, but I choose these particular words quite consciously and purposely in order to convey the impact of what it has felt like being *an incomplete human being, conscious of their incompleteness and a lifetime of attempting to be more fully human*".

This was an impressive introduction and yet I was curious to know what she meant by having her mind interfered with, so I asked her "what do you mean by this?". As part of our process we were working with an audiotape, so that Louise could capture our conversation and draw out points for clarification in her dissertation. This is how she responded:

"What do I mean by that? What is education? In my experience, this is how we are taught: Education is not about the essence of the person, we think about it as if it is information. This is the best way I can describe it, imagine being a little person all happy with the world, we use words like 'my confidence is blown' but what is confidence? It is about how you feel deep, deep, inside. Logically, there should be no reason why I should struggle to write this MA, yet I do. It's my experience that the formal education system, like the mental health institutions, have disregarded experiential forms of sense making because they are more interested in training people to conform, to become workers and not thinkers. It is a by-product of capitalism. To say this in the public domain is scary, how will it be received?"

Later on in the tape we returned to this theme as Louise teased out the similarities of peer and self-organisation in the beliefs and practice of Future Search and re-evaluation counselling.<sup>91</sup> Louise explained how she made her own way in the world, when at sixteen she left school to join and live in a house belonging to the Jewish Socialist Youth Movement, where they performed plays, worked on the land and learned how to live together, in preparation for life on a kibbutz. Additionally, she described joining the women's movement in her

---

<sup>91</sup> Louise belonged to a re-evaluation counselling group, and she had shared some of the ideas of this peer counselling process with the MAPOD community, but I had never understood why she was so committed to it, or indeed, how or if at all there were any links between it and how she worked, or what her values were as a change agent.

twenties, where she says traditional ideas about what constituted knowledge were being questioned. More significantly, she spoke about the re-evaluation counselling movement, which she joined, as having goals concerned with the total functioning of human beings. She said that re-evaluation counselling assumes that those outstanding abilities present in some people are latent in everyone. She spoke of meeting the founder, Harvey Jackins, who told her that he “had the highest expectations of her, and believed that she would become a leader”. Louise said that “this is the first time in my life that anyone had any expectations of me, and they were the highest, he was so full of expectation”. Louise further explained that once she had failed her eleven plus, there were no further expectations of her in school, and she described being put in a class with people who were deemed to have the lowest educational abilities.

For the first time in two years I understood what the underlying distress was that had caused Louise to struggle with her writing on MAPOD, and possibly why she had expressed on the page so many muddled thoughts in her earlier assignments. She had lost her confidence in her ability to think, and this explained why she found thinking hard, why her search for clarity of mind and expression was important. I also understood for the first time why re-evaluation counselling was important to her, and furthermore I now understood the links she could see between this and Future Search, both of which were processes of facilitating voice that shared the fundamental values of inclusiveness, self and peer organisation, and why they did not need experts.

In her dissertation Louise says: “The writing of this dissertation serves a number of purposes, one of which is that it is the vehicle that I am using to reclaim my mind”, and she links her quest to reclaim her mind with her paid role as a training manager to ‘engage’ other people’s minds in ideas such as the learning organisation.

Louise had lost her train of thought so many times when writing assignments, it had frustrated her and her peers. On the tape she tells me she had experienced “a brilliant piece of teaching” in our conversation and she asked me “what did you do to get that out of me?”. I was lost for words and unable to answer her for, after all, all that I had done was to listen to her, respond to her account, ask questions and seek points of clarification, returning her story to her as she linked the parts to the whole. Grumet (1991) talking about the politics of personal knowledge,<sup>92</sup> reminds us that “telling a story involves giving oneself away”. She says:

“So if telling a story requires giving oneself away, then we are obligated to devise a method of receiving stories that mediates the space between the self that tells, the self told, and the self that listens: a method that returns a story to the teller that is both hers, and not hers, that contains her self in good company” (Grumet, 1991:70).

What I am suggesting is that the process of narrative posturing in the teaching and learning relationship mediates a space that helps the student give birth to their knowledge (the knowledge of their lived experience, linking the parts to the whole) and then returns the story to the knower, that is both hers and not hers. By this I mean the story has evolved or changed as a direct result of this learning relationship and the educative influence that has been exercised in the dialogic conversation, and finally, that it is in the context of this relationship that the knower (storyteller) is contained in good company, one that is humanising, in which past distress may quite literally dissolve in the process.

In terms of the problem identified in the previous chapter of students being ‘in over their heads’ (Kegan, 1994) as they grapple with the academic demands of constructed knowing, what I am suggesting here is that the process of narrative posturing (which is intimately connected to the stories told by the students as

---

<sup>92</sup> In *Stories Lives Tell*.

described above), is an act of loving and life affirming education that helps returns the knower to the known, whilst at the same time helping her grapple with the procedural demands of academic disciplines and the reconstruction of new knowledge. This is made possible by creating and sustaining a learning environment that contains her in good company. Let us look at this claim more closely in the video clips.

### **Working with Louise**

I suggest we begin by returning to Louise at the action learning set meeting of January 2001, when she presents her full draft to the set.<sup>93</sup>

This meeting brings together Louise, Margaret, Sam and me. With the exception of Louise and Margaret, the other set members (Gareth, John, Kate and Sam) completed in November 2000. Finding a time when everyone can be present is becoming increasingly difficult as people have to manage existing work commitments. However, there remains a commitment to Louise and Margaret, such that those unable to attend in person have read Louise's draft and telephoned and/or e-mailed her with feedback.

I begin by suggesting that we start with a 'check-in', which provides those present with an opportunity to share how they are feeling at the moment and update their peers on what the key events or issues are in their lives at this time. In her check-in, Louise describes "eating and living and breathing" her dissertation, and thanks her peers for coming. Margaret shares her experience of losing her father and uses the time to re-connect with the set. Sam describes "sleeping through December" in a post-dissertation phase of relaxation. I express my pleasure at being here for Louise, and share the sentiments of a conversation

---

<sup>93</sup> Click on CD-R, File 2, named Louise's dissertation. See Appendix 2 for instructions on how to use the CD-R..



I had with Kate the previous evening, in which we jointly expressed the view that “Louise had travelled a great distance in the production of draft”. I thus begin from a place of admiration.

Louise is then asked how she would like to proceed. She reminds us of her assessment criteria and invites feedback on the clarity of the draft, asking us to differentiate between that which is essential and that which is desirable, and she expresses “feeling good about who is here” to help her with this task. We agree to begin with a ‘round robin’, each taking a turn to share what resonated or stood out for us in the account.

Having worked closely with Louise, and being genuinely delighted for her in the progress that she has made, I have been concerned to ensure that my feedback is not limited by my familiarity and intimacy with her work, and that other students do not feel that Louise is given an unfair advantage by my judgment or what may be perceived as my vested interest in her success. With this in mind I asked Peter, a MAPOD colleague, to read Louise’s draft and provide written feedback (I met with Peter to discuss the similarities and differences in our perspectives before the set meeting). I inform the set that this is what I have done, and explain that I will be feeding back these shared perspectives. Louise indicates that she is pleased to have Peter’s feedback included.<sup>94</sup>

In the first clip I can be seen summing up this shared feedback with the intention of helping Louise further (clarifying her writing and framing of her account). I feel pleased and satisfied at the coherence with which the feedback appears to capture the focus of this research.

---

<sup>94</sup> Although Peter was not one of the original tutors for this cohort, he took over the facilitation of one of the dissertation sets when their tutor withdrew from the programme. He also had developed a good working relationship with the MAPOD 4 community, working with this cohort on their community review module.

The second clip begins with me framing a question to Louise about when she first noticed that her inquiry had taken a reflective turn, by which I was referring to the linking of the personal with the organisational process of this inquiry. This question serves to open up a conversation between all members present. It begins with Louise responding by saying “I couldn’t begin anything without looking at it from a personal perspective first”, followed by Margaret recalling her memory of how Louise began this inquiry. Margaret suggests that Louise first introduced ‘future search’ as something she might be interested in, with the organisational use of it being an afterthought rather than the primary driver. Louise seems to agree with this recollection of events. Although it may not be critical to know which came first, the personal or the organisational, I would suggest that it is useful to reflect on the process and where possible capture the order of one’s process, as it can help understand the primary motivations behind an inquiry. This can help point to where muddle or confusion may be presented in an account and help clarify one’s explanations and accounting. What emerged that was relevant to Louise as a result of this conversation, was that she had in mind two different audiences as she was writing her account, those being the academy (and the company of her peers) and her employing organisation. In her attempt to speak to the different interests of these two audiences, without signalling or acknowledging who she was addressing, Louise was contributing unwittingly to her own muddle and thus impeding her own clarity of expression.

So why show these two moments in the conversation? My point is to show how these moments punctuate the collective process of inquiry, and specifically to show my influence in this process. In the first moment, I might be forgiven for my enthusiasm to help Louise gain greater clarity in her account, but it is also an example of a living contradiction, in that I have fallen in love with my own ideas; in other words, my way of seeing things. I am not thinking reflexively in the process, and it is only the intuition of my gut that leads me to ask Louise the

question about the point at which the reflective turn was taken in the inquiry, that opens up a space for a new and more ‘truthful’ story to emerge.

### **Working with Margaret**

The second video clip that I want to show you is of Margaret’s ‘check-in’. In my chapter “Working with Margaret” and in my comments above, I mention how the ‘check-in’ provides Margaret with an opportunity to reconnect with the set and with her own research project following a period of absence, during which she has suffered bereavement from the loss of her father. I want to show you this clip because I believe it offers a glimpse of how the MAPOD process contains an individual in good company, and more specifically, how the check-in prepares me to work with individual students. Although this check-in is at the set meeting to work specifically with Louise and her draft dissertation, it also serves to set a tone and prepare the way for Margaret and I to work together on a one-to-one basis in the coming weeks. For me, it is an important part of my process of inquiry, in that the meaning of the event influences my way of being with Margaret in our subsequent meeting and thus influences the quality of the learning relationship between us.

The file is in three parts.<sup>95</sup> It shows the set listening to Margaret as she takes the time to tell us of her experience during the final days of her father’s life and of his funeral and memorial service. What I notice as I view this scene through the eye of the camera, is how we are with Margaret, how we watch and listen and pay attention to her story. How, for example, we acknowledge her telling of the circle of men who gather around her father as he reaches his final hours.

---

<sup>95</sup> To begin click onto the CD-R, File 1 named “Louise check-in Part 1”. This contains Louise’s check-in and is followed by the beginning of Margaret’s check-in. Then proceed to Part 2 and then Part 3 to continue Margaret’s check-in.

I see myself wiping away a tear as I watch Margaret's eyes water, as she holds back her tears, composing herself to continue her telling. I sense her emotion, mindful of the nature of her inquiry of self-identity and voice, and her relationship with voices of authority (one of whom was her father), and I wonder how she is feeling and coping with the swirl of emotions that may arise. I understand the love for and the loss of a father, having lost mine in 1996 (two years into my inquiry) and consequently, I understand the range of emotions and responses that the loss of a father can bring forth. As I reflect on the emotionality of the bereavement process, I am aware of what is 'my stuff' and what is not Margaret's. I admire her composure.

Kegan (1994:8)<sup>96</sup> tells us that "Wondering at is watching and reverencing; wondering about is asking and reckoning", the former being Eastern, contemplative, aesthetic and feminine, and the latter being typically Western, analytical and masculine. He does not favour one mode of attending to our lives over the other, but suggests his approach to understanding the challenges of learning in postmodern times involves drawing deeply on both. Through the visual images (records that I have made as an aid to reflect on my practice), I have come to appreciate more fully how I draw on these different modes as I feel for and respond to the necessities of my students.

At the end of her check-in, Margaret says:

"It is so vital to connect with you guys. All through this, my POD group has been part of my extended family support, the letters, the e-mails and telephone calls. It has helped me be reflective in the midst of it, and has given me an awareness of how I would discuss this with you guys".

---

<sup>96</sup> In the prologue to *In Over Our Heads*.

Implicit in this comment is, I suggest, Margaret's own acknowledgement that she is "contained in good company".

The next clip I would like to share with you was recorded in December 2000 and involves working with Marcia and Sue from the MAPOD 5 cohort who have brought some work in progress with them for their change agent assignment. I have worked with Marcia throughout her time on the programme, and with Sue since the third assignment toward the end of year one. Let us begin by looking at Marcia's session.<sup>97</sup>

### **Working with Marcia**

Marcia is a health visitor working in one of the most socially deprived estates in Hertfordshire, on the outskirts of London. I had worked with Marcia continuously since the start of the programme and I had become quite familiar with her learning journey when we began this assignment at the beginning of year two.

At the residential for the change agent module, Marcia shared with her peers her knowledge of what being a reflective practitioner involved, and introduced a number of models commonly used in nursing to the group; including Kim's (1999) model of the reflective process, which involves three stages from description, to comparative analysis and finally to critique. Marcia had expressed a concern about whether she could call herself a change agent, regarding the term as more fitting to large-scale strategic interventions that many of her MAPOD management consulting peers were engaged with, her role having more of a one-to-one relationship with clients. She had brought with her some writing, which she introduced to us by reading it aloud. This is how she begins:

---

<sup>97</sup> Click onto CD-R File 3 named "Marcia change agent". There are five short clips of Marcia's session.

“Bump, bump, bump Christopher Robin is coming down the stairs holding Pooh bear with one hand and dragging him backwards down the stairs, his head bumping on each stair as he descends”.

I am aware that I am uncomfortable with children’s stories and cartoons that proliferate in the popular management ‘how to’ books, and so I have to make myself pay attention and not switch off. I have a lot of respect for Marcia’s integrity and she has mentioned before that she often uses ideas from *Winnie the Pooh* when she is working with nurses and teaching them about reflective practice. She claims they love these examples, so I begin to listen more carefully, wondering what she will reveal. I wonder out loud if bumping is a ‘rude awakening’? Marcia describes bumping as a metaphor for the chaos and complexity of everyday life that some of her clients experience.

She then moves her account to her clinic where she has a room full of waiting mothers and approximately ten minutes of time allocated to attend to each of them. Mary, a young mother has come in some distress.<sup>98</sup> There is a story about one of her children having difficulty sleeping and she wants to let Marcia know that she is again involved with psychiatric services, she reveals that her boyfriend is living back with her and the family, and that he is injecting again. Marcia has prior knowledge of Mary and recalls a similar scenario some time back. This is how Marcia describes her reflective process:

“This is the doing I do.”

“In the ten minutes I had in a busy waiting room with other mothers waiting I had to very quickly decide, prioritise and act. A number of things guided me in this process. I usually start with a process of self-questioning. National and local policy further informs decisions, for example *The Children Act (1989)*, the principle of the paramount welfare of the child,

---

<sup>98</sup> ‘Mary’ is not the real name of Marcia’s client but a pseudonym, used to preserve client confidentiality.

local child protection procedures. Ethical interests of the child and the family as a whole come into play.”

There are potential child protection issues here. Marcia makes an appointment to see Mary at her home the next day where she can spend a longer period of time with her, and with Mary’s permission arranges to speak to psychiatric services beforehand. Explaining her reflective process further Marcia tell us:

“That evening I thought a lot about Mary. As a person I really liked her having now spent many hours with her. I feel very sad at the hand life has dealt her and feel that there is a great missed potential. I also have feelings of anger and frustration around Mary’s relationship with John. It causes me to pause and question my own beliefs and values. Could I display that degree of loyalty, although misguided and misplaced? Can Mary not see that she is being a mother to John rather than a partner? My attitudes towards drug and alcohol misuse, my place as a parent, could I ever reach a point where I would place my children in this position? I had a great concern that Mary appeared to have little insight into the effects that the current situation may be having on her children, where do I begin to untangle this mess?”.

Marcia has the full attention of both Sue and I as she relays this account. I ask whether she has to have Mary’s permission to speak to psychiatric services or whether it is a matter of protocol? Marcia explains that they are not very forthcoming without it, so it is easier if she has it. This question serves to open up a conversation that explores the role of psychiatric services in relation to the health visiting role. It becomes apparent that whilst psychiatric services deal with Mary as an individual client they do not take the whole family into account. This leads us to reflect together on the ‘big c’ (change) issues and systems interventions, with Marcia telling us that local management, in the form of the primary care trusts, are likely to impact on these services to the detriment of the care for and well-being of the client. Marcia suggests that the ‘big c’ for her is contained in the possibility of working with many more Marys and that she tries to influence change in the everyday factors affecting the lives of women like

Mary on this estate, by being active as a school governor and working with partnership projects that are concerned with improving the housing estate.

I explore how much of this work is a matter of Marcia's own initiative and what would come within the expected remit of her role. It becomes clear how Marcia's work is guided by her own values and how these determine the level of contribution she makes, over and above what is expected. At the end of this review Marcia tells us that she can now see that the 'small c' is ok, "I can work with what is me, that's good enough". I respond with "It's more than ok".

I am not suggesting that I am teaching Marcia anything. On the contrary, she has taught me a great deal, but I am suggesting that both Sue and I are helping to contain her in good company, that our attention to her story, our attempt to help her draw out the link between the so-called 'little c' interventions and the 'big c' issues, helps affirm Marcia in the value of the work and contribution she makes to the lives of women like Mary and her family. In the face of cuts in services we are, I suggest, helping Marcia sustain her contribution and value what she knows to be a quality of care given in the most difficult of circumstances.

## **Conclusions**

In the three examples that I have given, illuminated by the visual representation of CD-R, I have sought to show what the qualities of loving and life affirming educative relations mean to me in respect of the individual relations I have with these particular students, as I respond to their educational needs and, with others, strive to contain them in good company. Additionally, I suggest that the CD-R reveals something about the nature of who I am as an educator, who we are as a community of learners on the MAPOD programme and how the working alliance created within this community has created an educative practice that helps return individuals to their stories as more complete human beings.



It is precisely because the CD-R reveals who we are as teachers and educators that it has value in respect of both enhancing the validity and quality of educational action research.

“An existential orientation leads us to focus on who we are as teacher educators, the decisions that we make and the actions we take that construct who we are, and the acceptance of our responsibility for who we are” (Feldman, 2003:27).

Eisner (1997:9) asks the questions “How can we display what we have learned?”, “What forms can we trust?”, “What modes are legitimate?” and “How shall we know?”. Such questions and how we explore them, he suggests, will help redefine what educational action research means. We are, he says, “exploring the edges”.

“There is no better place from which to see the stars and no better place from which to discover new seas than the view one gets from the edge” (Eisner, 1997:9).

“‘Come to the edge’, he said.  
They said, ‘We are afraid’.  
‘Come to the edge’, he said.  
They came.  
He pushed them.

And they flew.”  
(Appollinaire, cited in Eisner, 1997:9).

To come to the edge is an injunction that I have responded to in the course of this inquiry and in the construction of this thesis. It is also a metaphor that I have used with MAPOD students to encourage them to risk themselves in exploring new possibilities for their inquiries. As Feldman suggests, self-study and the validity of self-study “is a political work and has implications for policy makers” (2003:27). He also describes it as a moral work, the ambitions of which extend beyond the particulars of our personal study, improving and influencing what happens in our colleges, universities and schools.

In this chapter I have, by accounting for myself in the form of alternative visual representation, sought to reveal my embodied values in action and the subtleties of my way of being in teaching and learning relationships with particular students on the MAPOD programme.

The representation of my inquiry in this way provides a way of accounting for my professional development in respect of the aesthetic qualities and artistry of my practice, developed over time. In other words, revealing the emergence of my connoisseur's eye as I worked with students on cohorts 4 and 5 of the MAPOD programme, practising with a heightened awareness and skill that guides me in my learning relationships. The visual form supplements the descriptions and explanations I give about my practice, revealing qualities of graceful and reciprocal educative relations that I dimly apprehended at the early stages of this inquiry. As a sociology of method, it serves to remind me how I need to be with students if I am to live my values more fully in practice, and reveals those moments when I experience myself as a living contradiction.

# **CHAPTER TEN: EDUCATING THE SOCIAL FORMATION: REFLECTING ON THE INFLUENCE OF MY LIVING THEORY INQUIRY**

## **Introduction**

In this chapter I reflect on the challenge of educating the social formation and transforming the educative sphere. I do this by reflecting on the influence of my living theory inquiry by asking what difference this has made to both my practice and that of my students. In addition, I ask the question “How can we create a good social order in the field of higher education?” and explore what this means for the academy. Reason and Marshall (1987) identify stakeholders of the personal process of human inquiry as ‘me, us and them’, and I utilise these labels to frame and organise this chapter.

## **For Me: How Has My Living Theory Influenced and Changed My Practice?**

### *Background*

When I began this research I had little understanding of how to put my ‘I’ in the centre of my inquiry. First of all, I had to understand the context of my inquiry in respect of the broad aims and objectives of the MAPOD programme. During the early years of MAPOD (see Chapter Six) my attention focused primarily on external factors that influenced learning such as the strategy and design for learning, the actions and activities of others, and the theory and rationale for self-directed adult learning. My focus of attention at this early stage included:

- establishing the conditions for a learning community;
- encouraging the staff team to reflect on our practice; and
- working out how to move from teaching about personal development to doing personal development work with students.

Whilst all these factors were important, what I had been missing was an inner focus of attention on my own practice. Nevertheless, the external focus of those early years had been necessary, precisely because they provided me with a context of experience that enabled me to recognise the emergence of my values in practice, and the experience of their denial in practice by myself and others. The very nature of my experience of the early years served to shape my perception of my underlying purpose as an educator that emerged as a concern for finding and facilitating voice, both for myself and for my students. Specifically, this involved addressing the experience of being silenced, revealed in learning histories and life stories in an attempt to overcome the damage that had been done to individuals in terms of a loss of voice or sense of self or mind.

Learning to put my 'I' at the centre of inquiry involved becoming a reflective practitioner. To become a reflective practitioner is a process of personal and professional development that requires a commitment to change our way of being in the world to one that is more consistent with living our values in practice. It extends what traditionally is thought of as professional development, beyond the acquisition of skills and knowledge; in other words, the 'doing' self, to include a focus for transforming the 'being' self. Clarkson (1995) emphasises the importance of feelings as integral to personal development, noting that they are usually omitted from traditional professional development programmes. Recognising the importance of feelings, such as anxiety and its consequences for learning, proved to be an integral part of my own inquiry in coming to know myself as a living contradiction and, in turn, learning to respond with humanity, rationality and justice in my educative relations.

What I had to discover about my practice lay in the gaps between my espoused values and lived reality in my teaching and learning relationships. Whilst I had a fairly clear idea about what I espoused and my 'living theory' in practice

(Whitehead, 1989), I had not addressed my self as a living contradiction in the early days.

### *Experiencing my 'I' as a living contradiction*

Whilst I invariably tried to be fair in my academic judgments, the process of assessment was experienced by some students as more than a rational exercise of judgment; rather it was viewed as a negative experience that diminished the self. What I perceived as a fair assessment based on straight talk of strengths and weaknesses was experienced as a harsh judgment that disempowered rather than nurtured the learner and undermined their potential for growth and development. What I perceived as a strategy of 'being cruel to be kind' was not appreciated by students, who were not ready for the complex demands that were being made of them by the academy to be self-directed, especially where they had little or no prior experience of the higher education sector. In paying attention to student feedback of this kind, I began to recognise myself as a living contradiction, and saw the inherent contradictions in the system itself. For example, the assessment process on MAPOD involved power sharing; nonetheless, the weight of power resided in the tutor decision, and in the inherent contradiction of the academic system, in that what the academy required and wanted from a student was not always the same as what they apparently wanted for themselves or what they expected.

### *Finding a way forward*

The experience of this type of contradiction was so fundamental to the values I aspired to live out in my practice I was even more determined to work with them to find a way forward. The examples given in this thesis mark a move to attend to my inquiry in a disciplined systematic and rigorous manner. As such, I began to experience my 'I' in practice, focused on a continuous process of

improvement, as I engaged with my students as collaborators to improve my practice. This dialogic process enabled me to generate theories about what works and what does not in creating an ethic of care in the teaching and learning relationship. As part of my process, I have subjected my claims to public scrutiny in the form of conference papers, testing my theories in the public domain to an audience of critical friends.

In turning my attention inwards, I began by committing myself to a process of inquiry within a model of continuing professional practice, punctuated by cycles of action and reflection. This involved taking time to reflect both on and in my teaching-learning relationships with individual students and groups of students in action learning sets, as can be seen for example in Chapters Seven and Eight. These activities shaped a discipline of personal and professional inquiry that included:

- looking back and learning through my experience;
- developing the quality of my knowledge in action and my associate understanding of my practice;
- development of self-critical reflection, exposing the pretensions of my claims and dealing with the reality of denying my own values in practice; and
- finding ways forward to improve my practice.

I began to articulate this approach to my inquiry as a strategy of humanistic action research (Hartog, 2002a), in that it was person-centred and concerned with creating an ethic of care in my teaching and learning relationships that was responsive to the humanity and educative needs of individual students and groups. In addition, I began to recognise that qualities of care in respect of nurture, protection and growth were important features of my maternal knowing that were shaping my responses to student needs.

*Where did this need for an ethic of care come from?*

Firstly, from the student feedback which suggested that I could be a more careful facilitator of their learning, particularly when giving assessment feedback which if unfavourable heightened the pain and anxiety experienced by many in the assessment process. An experience that became an obstacle to learning itself.

Secondly, from the influence of Belenky *et al.* (1986) whose work promotes the strategy of the 'connected teacher' whose description is likened to that of a midwife. The midwife helps the student draw out their knowledge in their account, and in so doing helps them find their voice and reclaim their mind. By paying careful attention to what my students had to say and to what they wrote, and by shifting my focus from what they had not said or what appeared to be missing in their work (a strategy typical of the approach many educators take to assessment, which employs general and universal standards to judge a piece of work), I was able to stand alongside my students as they produced their accounts, and in the process create an educative space conducive to loving and life affirming educative relations of the kind to which I aspired.

*Becoming a reflective practitioner*

The process involved in becoming a reflective practitioner required a shift from advocacy to inquiry, and overcoming the felt need to protect my own ego defences as though they were my integrity, thus learning the skills of what Rowan (2001) calls maturity. Developing these skills of reflective inquiry involved four distinct stages:

1. Becoming aware of the emergence of my ego defences in response to difficulties or challenges to my decisions.

2. A willingness to be responsible for myself and to address the consequences of my actions.
3. A commitment to get on the inside of my practice, by subjecting it to the scrutiny of others, and a desire to better understand and improve it.
4. A shift in what Rowan describes as the mental ego, in other words a position of power over others, to the mature ego of power with others.

Marshall (2001) emphasises the dynamic process of inquiry that is framed by inner and outer arcs of attention. This dynamic, I suggest, is significant in facilitating the step change that is necessary to shift from a mental ego to a mature ego. In my case, the inner focus centred on my practice. Running in parallel was a focus of inquiry that drew in my life story and learning history, and an outer focus that formed a critique of the academy itself. Having got on the inside of my practice, I had to turn my attention to the context in which my practice was based.

#### *From the inside-out*

What began to dawn on me in the course of my inquiry was the problematic nature of the modular system in relation to the goals of MAPOD that encouraged deep learning, and personal and professional development. There was a tension here between what traditionally is being assessed at Masters level, in terms of skills and knowledge, and what we were trying to do on MAPOD, i.e. integrating the developmental process and asking students to address their process in the learning accounts.

The modular system contains the teaching, learning and assessment process within a given unit of learning that is usually fixed to a timescale,<sup>99</sup> at the end of

---

<sup>99</sup> On average, twelve weeks.



which a number of academic credits are awarded for successful completion of the module. As a learning device it breaks the learning down into bite-size chunks. Whilst this works reasonably well for knowledge and skills-based learning, it can be problematic where the learning goals include personal and professional development or deep learning of the kind we were working towards on MAPOD.

I began to see the systemic problem that undermined our MAPOD goals as one where the tail was wagging the dog. The benefit of longer timeframes between periods of action and reflection, typical of a more traditional course based structure, became very apparent when the MAPOD 4 students elected to extend the time taken to complete their dissertation to include the two full academic years. I began to wonder whether the assessment if managed differently, perhaps as an integrated programme and assessed over the longer term in the form of a portfolio or a series of projects, might better serve the learning needs of all our MAPOD students.<sup>100</sup> We never did get to take these ideas further as the university decided to close the programme on financial grounds, before it got to the end of its fifth year when we would have gone back to a validation panel.

### *Looking beyond my practice to a critique of the wider system*

Boud (2002) argues that assessment is problematic, precisely because in his experience it causes the student pain, and he calls for a rethink and critique of the assessment process.

Though MAPOD used many practices that Boud advocates, such as self and peer assessment that involves the student in the process of assessment and gives the student a greater degree of responsibility for their learning, my own inquiry had

---

<sup>100</sup> One of my colleagues believed that we should run MAPOD as a development programme without academic credit.

led me to wonder about the ethics of containing MAPOD within the modular framework, since the very system that framed the teaching, learning and assessment process seemed to be contributing to undermining the very process of learning itself.

Boud (2002) calls for a critical review and by implication he is indicating that assessment tends to be regarded as a technical activity, not unlike an accounting technique. In higher education, the goals of assessment serve to accredit and mark the achievement of an award based on a course of academic study.

Let me indicate here, by drawing on Bauman, the potential perversity of a technical approach to assessment. Bauman (1996), drawing on his analysis of the holocaust, claims that we can better understand how managerial practice can dehumanise. He argues that managerial techniques can erode sympathy for the other in that they can serve to authorise violence, routinise actions and dehumanise victims. This is the danger that an inappropriate academic framework and a technical approach to the assessment process can have. Bauman (1996) further argues that developing an ethical attachment to other people is a fundamental aspect of ethics and he contends that we need to educate for the other.

The assessment process removes the apparent need for 'empathy for the other' from the equation, since our taken for granted protocol for assessment is deemed principally to be a technical and rational process.

Although the modular framework is relatively recent (at MUBS we adopted this framework to 'manage' teaching, learning and assessment in the early nineties), assessment is institutionalised as a normative process based on a rational discourse of reason and argument and many people have an investment in it. Indeed, I would argue that tutors share that investment, as Boud rightly points

out, they have survived it, they are the successful ones, regardless of whether they have experienced themselves as the victim in the course of their journey.<sup>101</sup>

I am not suggesting that because something is institutionalised it should not or cannot be changed if it is damaging those whose interests it seeks to serve, of course it should. The dilemma as I see it is how to find a way forward that gives the academic process integrity and at the same time meets the learning and development needs of the students in a more humane way.

*Beyond awareness: toward a system for loving and life affirming educative practice*

Boud's (2002) lecture invokes moral reasoning and invites a critique of the system that manages teaching, learning and assessment in the academy, but it does not show how to develop awareness of the other. This is where reflective practice, in the form of my thesis as a self-study of a tutor in higher education, makes an original contribution. It shows my process of inquiry toward developing loving and life affirming educational practice, as I learn to invoke my maternal knowledge in my practice, and work towards an ethic of care in my teaching and learning relationships, recognising that care alone is not enough. However, a practice that is informed by both care and critique may go a long way to improve the rationality and justice of educative relations. Notwithstanding these factors, in developing my connoisseur's eye, I discover a way of being in educative relations with my students through 'connected' educative relations that contain them in good company and return them to their stories as more complete human beings. It is this practice of connoisseurship that has made a fundamental difference to my practice.

---

<sup>101</sup> Though I would suggest that the majority of academics who have come through the British system are likely to have experienced a more integrated programme-based education than the modular approach that is so prevalent today.

### *Educating for change*

The other side of the coin involves educating, critiquing and, where appropriate, campaigning to change those parts of the system that undermine the very process of learning itself. In this regard, I have taken the first steps of putting my ideas and learning from my inquiry into the public domain in conference papers and publications.

Writing about ethical education, McPhail (2001:282), an accounting lecturer in higher education, identifies three objectives:

1. disruption;
2. the development of a broad view of the profession; and
3. the development of moral sensitivity .

### **To Sum Up: 'For Me'**

For me, the self-study of a higher education tutor combines a process of critical self-reflection of one's own practice and an associate critique of the wider academic system. In short, it facilitates a process of ethical awareness, disrupted by helping the tutor appreciate the impact of their actions on the *other*, particularly in the appreciation of how routine actions can have an impact, such as our taken for granted approach to assessment as a technical exercise.

Ethical awareness does not mean having a solution. Indeed, it is precisely the lack of a fixed solution that fosters a grappling with and reflection on the process. This does, however, enable the tutor to come to see the values she has about teaching, learning and assessment, and to notice where they fall short in practice from those that may be espoused. Not necessarily having a solution

enables one to be self-reflexive and aware of the distinctions between the self and the role one occupies.

McPhail (2001:285) draws our attention to the debate in moral philosophy that distinguishes between ethics as a process of reason and that which shows ethics as a process of moral sensibility. It is only when emotion is legitimised in the teaching and learning relationship that we can begin to fully appreciate the pain or anxiety the student experiences, and it is this awareness that may help us shift our thinking from seeing and regarding assessment purely on technical and rational grounds.

“Understanding how and why individuals may be affected in particular ways by your actions is one thing but entering into the anxiety, pain, fear, despair and hatred that another sentient human being experiences as a result of your actions is far more disturbing and disrupting. This objective goes to the core of ethics” (McPhail, 2001:284).

What I want to suggest that my inquiry has done is to help me know and articulate my educative values within a framework of an ethic of care in my teaching and learning relationships. It has enabled me to develop myself as a moral agent through a process of self-critical and critical inquiry. In addition, the process of my inquiry and the descriptions and explanations contained in this thesis as I have responded to the core question of my inquiry, “How can I improve my practice”, have enabled me to communicate that process to others, adding to the body of knowledge in respect of how we might create loving and life-affirming practice in education, and showing how self-study combined with critique of the wider academic system can help us live our values more fully in our practice.

## **For Us: Making a Difference**

For my students, my inquiry has influenced their experience of higher education and participation on a Masters degree programme, and their ability to make a difference in their own organisations or professional sphere. The programme, whilst seeking to develop student autonomy in learning, embraced the following ideas:

- working with real live issues;
- action learning;
- community building;
- responsibility for the learning of self and others;
- linking the personal and the organisational process; and
- becoming critical and organising reflection.

Though I was not the only tutor to conceive the MAPOD programme, there is no doubt that several of these ideas have evolved as a direct result of my own inquiry. By asking the question “How can I improve my practice?”, I have implicitly been asking “How can I better support and facilitate the learning of my students?”. Perhaps the most significant development for ‘us’ has been the work that my inquiry has facilitated in respect of:

- working with life story and learning history to help students link personal and professional narratives;
- integrating these through critical action learning; and
- the organisation of reflection on practice.

Critical action learning, as defined by Wilmot (1994), challenges the potential for ethical neutrality inherent in more conventional action learning interventions, in that it depends on critical reflection on practice, which includes being

prepared to challenge the status quo and/or taken for granted assumptions, as well as drawing on critical theoretical traditions that uncover the assumptions or rhetoric inherent in much conventional management theory. Furthermore, it extends the curriculum beyond the definition of the manager and organisation to include in its scope society and the wider stake-holding community. As such, it places the management learning and development agenda beyond the individual manager (student-practitioner) to one that is interdependent with the well-being and learning of society at large.

Two examples of student success stories, in respect of critical action learning and organising reflection, are provided. I want to suggest they are exemplars of the quality of work that some MAPOD students were able to achieve. They are success stories, and it is the success of the students that I want to advocate, and not solely the influence of my inquiry process. These case examples have been included with the consent of the students (Hartog, 2004).<sup>102</sup> This chapter grew out of a paper<sup>103</sup> originally written for a teaching business ethics conference, and later accepted for publication.<sup>104</sup> This paper marks a significant transition in my thinking about how to better influence the social formation between ‘us’ on the MAPOD programme, by formalising my approach to the facilitation of learning from action learning as a problem solving approach to a critical approach to action learning and a problem posing approach.

Anthony’s (1998) critique<sup>105</sup> resonated with the approach that I had been developing on MAPOD, hitherto informally guided by the issues that students had brought to action learning sets. Avoiding any prescriptive educational

---

<sup>102</sup> In “Educating the reflective educator” (Hartog, 2004), a chapter for a book entitled *Organizing Reflection*.

<sup>103</sup> Called “Critical action learning: teaching business ethics”.

<sup>104</sup> With some amendments, in the *Journal of Reflective Practice*, due to be published during 2004.

<sup>105</sup> “Management education: ethics versus morality”.

endeavour, Anthony suggests we should look to our students to guide us, by helping them draw out and learn from real-life work-based issues that go to the heart of the matter, asking the question “What is the nature of the ethical problem here?”.

His position that managers are moral agents, coupled with Wilmot’s stance on what distinguishes a critical approach to action learning from a traditional approach, helped me find a way forward that challenged the ethical neutrality of our action learning interventions. This enabled students to challenge the status quo, formalising and legitimising such a critique within a body of legitimate knowledge, namely critical management theory.

The reason for including this paper in Appendix 1 is because it is relevant to my thesis, precisely because it helped me shift the management learning agenda on MAPOD beyond the individual manager (student practitioner) to one that is interdependent with the well-being and learning of society at large. Moreover, it helped me to integrate and better understand how I could be in educative relations with my students and hold together in the dialectical tradition both a humanistic, feminist and critical perspective in order that I might better live my values in practice. This paper can be found in Appendix 1.

## **Organising Reflection as a Critique to Practice**

### *Case Study 1*

Nigel sets out his stall to become an ‘active listener’, by which he expresses a desire to develop his own practice and leadership style to listen to what his colleagues (500 subordinates) need from him and his management team, in the context of a period of long-term change in the business. His role is that of Operations Director for a business unit of a multinational bank.



Confronted with a piece of secondary data from an employee opinion survey, he determines a need to dig deeper to understand the responses to the survey, which indicate dissatisfaction with some aspects of management practice, leadership and organisational culture and support. He decided to follow up with his own local focus group, in order that he and his management team could both understand better the feelings behind these responses and begin to create a supportive culture of employment during the coming years.

He identifies his colleagues as significant stakeholders, as well as shareholders, whose primary concern is profit. He explains how he invites his senior local managers to facilitate this focus group with him, encouraging 'buy in' from them to ensure that action and outcomes are followed up on the ground. He shares his reflection of the focus group meeting:

"I remember that it did not feel like a formal meeting at all but as a group of individuals holding a conversation about something that was important to all parties."

Following the focus group, there was a communication event by each manager with their immediate teams, where Nigel outlined his plans to continue an active listening approach in his work with people in the organisation. In particular, he commits to follow up the coming employee opinion survey as a process of continuous growth for 'me, us and them'.

During the introduction to his dissertation, Nigel reflects on his early career with the bank and his perceived transition from manager to leader. He suggests that his own career development was shaped by a pedagogical approach to learning which equipped him to follow the rules. He reflects on how obedience to this rule-based and autocratic culture earned him early promotion in the ranks, but how it was achieved at a cost to his personal and work-based relationships.

“I was clearly being responsible for taking ownership for delivering the results, but at what cost to my reputation as a human being? Was I becoming simply a tool of the organisation, being led and clearly not listening to others? I had not considered the need to share my thoughts about what was to be achieved either for me, or collectively, or more fundamentally consulted about the systems I felt were appropriate.

I believe that my natural style has in the past been built around the coercive-authoritative style of manager, as distinct from leader, coupled with a strong tendency to ‘over manage’. This did not create the space for individual growth and personal development amongst my team, or perhaps for me as an individual.”

He suggests that he has shifted toward a “democratic, pacesetting and affiliate style”. Additionally, he discusses his experience of being invited to apply for redundancy a few years ago, and his shock at the lack of regard for him as a person in the way this was handled.

*So how is this student organising reflection?*

- His focus of attention goes beyond improving his practice as a leader, to changing the culture of leadership itself.
- He invites colleagues, in the context of a focus group, to engage and participate in this process within his directorate, and to create an alliance with him to change the leadership culture.
- Based on his experience of facing redundancy, he knows that employees, no matter how effective and loyal, are expendable. As a response he favours a leadership style that supports coaching and personal development, so that in the event of future change those employees are more equipped to find alternative employment inside or outside of the bank. These are important pragmatic issues where organisations cannot guarantee jobs for life, which goes to the heart of the psychological contract.

- He appreciates that employees have, as stakeholders in the firm, rights and expectations that go beyond a utilitarian approach to employee relations. Furthermore, his stance in relation to profit and growth is to go beyond the bottom line, enacting through his leadership a process of social accounting and not just one that is based on profit.
- He recognises that the employees have overlapping stakeholders' interests as employees of the bank, shareholders and as citizens; a position which is not insignificant in that his critical approach to action has an impact beyond the firm, to society, facilitating the long-term prospects of these employees as employable citizens who ultimately can continue to contribute to the wealth of the nation.
- His action (inviting his managers to engage in a focus group to understand better what the employees need of him and them, towards a leadership style of shared vision) is evidence that he is prepared to act on his espoused values.

#### *How did the action learning set help?*

The action learning set provided Nigel with support in setting up a dialogue with the employees. Earlier on in the programme, the set fed back to Nigel that participative leadership was more than him consulting with an employee about his plans; rather, it was a two way process of engagement, his actions suggest that he had learned to apply a different perspective from this earlier critique.

#### *Case Study 2*

This case study is drawn from the work of a student in the health service. Marcia is a nurse by profession and a qualified health visitor. She perceives that health visitors, as a group, are effectively silenced by lack of inclusion in the discussions taking place around the establishment of the new primary care trusts,

and that decisions about the future of the health visiting role did not reflect an understanding of that role or the needs of the client groups. She believed that the practice of health visiting would be constrained by the proposals. Time taken, for example, to visit clients would be limited. Who might get the service of a health visitor would also be subject to the limitations of the local resources. Marcia could see the dangers of a policy and practice that restricted proactive health visiting, both for the clients and for the very survival of the profession itself. Like children, she could see that her professional colleagues “were seen and not heard”.

Marcia invited health visitor colleagues from three primary care localities to attend one of several lunchtime focus groups to explore the future of health visiting in the light of the change to primary care trusts. The health visitors were invited to frame topics for discussion, which included:

- the current change agenda;
- the future role of health visiting;
- the nature of health visiting; and
- women and voice.

In framing her dissertation, she discusses the role of caring as the basis for the nursing profession, exploring the nature of ‘dirty work’ and emotional labour that is central to nursing. In health visiting, this includes dealing with domestic violence, drug and alcohol abuse, and child protection issues. Much of the work is with women and children.

Marcia describes the role of narrative telling, i.e. listening to stories, as being a key component of the job. She discusses the politics of how these skills and this knowledge are taken for granted as ‘women’s work’ and not valued. She argues that the politics of marginalising women’s issues confounds silence all round.

She goes on to critique the effect of bringing nurse education into the university sector and how, in her opinion, these valuable skills are further diminished and even lost within the rhetoric of scientific knowledge.

Marcia also reflects on her experience as the manager of an acute care project for children who need 24 hour nursing but who live at home and whose care is managed in the community. All the professionals knew the care demands of setting up a project like this in the community, yet adequate resources were not forthcoming. Marcia got to a point where she felt that the risks were too great for the children, her own family and for herself to continue. Exhausted, she resigned shortly before joining MAPOD because of the impossible demands that were being made of her to be on call 24 hours a day for weeks on end. She was critical of the health care system that allowed this to go on.

*So how is this student organising reflection?*

- Spurred on by her recovered sense of voice and mind she organised focus groups, inviting health visitors to explore and discuss their role.
- Marcia undertook to moderate and facilitate each focus group, taking responsibility for recording the discussions and for co-ordinating a report on the outcomes of those discussions. Her objective was to make the process as co-operative as possible. These groups were well attended and included experienced health visitors and newcomers to the profession.
- Her organisation of reflection in the focus group helps her health visitor colleagues generate insights about their role and the structures and relationships that silence them, e.g. “It is a quiet role”.
- She organises a series of recommendations that reflect back the issues arising in the focus groups, framing them “for us”, e.g. health visitors need to take stock of what they view as the core aspects of the role and in the direction they wish to take the profession, and “for them”, e.g.

managers need to pay attention to the level of disenfranchisement among their staff at ground level.

### *How did the action learning set help?*

As evidenced by her own reflective comments, the set provided her with support, creating a learning environment that encouraged her to critique her experience and practice. Pointing her toward relevant literature such as *WWK* (Belenky *et al.*, 1986) helped her link the issues of silence and voice in both her personal and organisational experience.

### **To Sum Up: For ‘Us’ Making a Difference**

Organising reflection as a social process can have a transformative effect on the reconstruction of personal and professional identities that serve to critique and change practice and influence the social sphere. Organising reflection can reveal and uncover the universal stories of oppression, such as silence, that can serve as a spur to action by linking the personal and the political.

Organising reflection as a social process involves the participation and engagement of individuals with one-another in a collective learning process. It involves a search for meaning with people, which emerges as a process of shared understanding, thus educating the social formation, not just the individual.

Educational action research and critical action learning are both concerned with improving the rationality and justice of practice settings, and their critical approach to organising reflection demonstrates the interdependence of individuals and society. For critical educators, the values that they bring to their practice provide them with standards of judgment whereby their practice might be subject to critique, helping them reveal and know themselves as ‘living

contradictions'. It is commitment to action to find a way forward where we may live our values more fully in our practice that is essential if education for democracy is to be realised. One measure of how they may be realised is, I suggest, how our educative practice influences the work of our students; in other words, how they create their own ethic of practice and extend democracy in their professional and organisational contexts.

### **For Them: How Can we Create a Good Social Order in Higher Education?**

In other words, how can my inquiry contribute to educating the social formation in the academy? In UK universities, the separation of theory and practice in respect of those who do research and those who do the teaching, is a significant problem. The challenge, I suggest, concerns how we link the 'actor' and the 'spectator' in educational judgment. The problem is exacerbated by the RAE (the research assessment exercise) that privileges research over teaching (practice), driven by harnessing financial reward and academic recognition to the output of publications.

Coulter (1999) suggests that if research knowledge is to contribute more to public and professional understanding, the emphasis needs to shift from the generation of research knowledge to consideration of the justification of what counts as appropriate and useful knowledge. In a subsequent article, Coulter and Weins (2002) argue that despite a proliferation of research paradigms we are in danger of producing 'new' old ways of understanding the relationship between educational practice and research knowledge. Furthermore, they suggest that we need to understand teaching as more than knowledge, but as a form of embodied judgment that links knowledge, virtue and reason (phronesis – roughly translated as judgment). They draw on the work of Arendt, who argues that we need to link thinking and acting without privileging either in the conception of judgment,

thus providing a resource for educational dialogue between teachers and researchers.

Though I believe the self-study of teacher researchers can overcome the theory-practice divide, it is the understanding of the relationship between thinking and action, and the role of educational judgment in arriving at a good social order that Coulter and Weins point to, that I suggest is useful to expand on here. Drawing on the work of Arendt, Coulter and Weins (2000) retrace the debated conceptions of judgment in the traditions of Aristotle and Kant:

- Phronesis involves an amalgam of knowledge, virtue and reason, enabling one to decide what to do.
- The Aristotelian conception of practice contrasts, on the one hand, practice as craft and, on the other, practice as praxis; in other words, moral-political action. Praxis is also linked to the notion of leading a worthwhile life.

In Aristotelian terms, knowledge and virtue are linked to community. However, Coulter and Weins (2000) caution us to see the problematic nature of this, since in Aristotelian times this was linked to the male citizens of ancient Greece, and is, by modern standards, elitist rather than democratic. Secondly, Coulter and Weins (ibid.) argue that in today's complex multiracial world, conceptions of virtue and community are perhaps even more hotly contested. Additionally, in Aristotelian times, phronesis was achieved by leading the contemplative life, in other words by the privileging of the spectator over the actor.

In the academy we might do well to consider whether the separation of teaching and research is a modern-day social and cultural anathema, i.e. one that perpetuates old prejudices, privileging an elite group of academics to the exclusion of others. My own experience suggests that this is so, and in my own



organisation the current proposal to create a graduate school staffed solely by people who are designated as research active would, in my view, serve to exacerbate this problem.

A Kantian approach begins by rejecting the elitism inherent in the Aristotelian conception of phronesis. The categorical imperative or the notion of the universal law obliges everyone to do their moral duty according to that law. 'Determinant judgment' includes political, moral and educational matters. "Judging involves using the knowledge of good ends to decide appropriate means" (Coulter and Weins (2000:16).

In educational terms, the application of theory to practice model would be an example of determinant judgment.

Kant distinguished another form of judgment, that being 'reflective judgment'. Coulter and Weins tell us that reflective judgment was "primarily concerned with aesthetic taste" and inspired Arendt to generate what they suggest is a more "powerful conception of judgment for education" (2000:16).

In contrast to determinate judgment (where meaning is found in the general), in reflective judgment, meaning is to be found in the particular. Laws and rules cannot apply the particular to the general, rather the link can be found in using the imagination. Secondly, the 'common sense' that can be found in the general and universal is inherent in the critical nature of the act of reflection.

Coulter and Weins remind us that there is no community standard of beauty, and that the capacity for judgment about matters of aesthetic taste is "within the capacity of us all" and thus not subject to an elite minority. They state:

"Dialogue about reflective judgments, however, is both possible and required: aesthetic criticism presumes the possibility of

persuading others of the quality of the judgment without epistemologically or ethically secure foundations. (Otherwise why bother?)” (2000:16).

Arendt’s work is concerned with trying to understand what it means to be an actor and what it means to be a spectator. This is driven by her experience as a student of philosophy and of her relationship with Heidegger (her mentor and lover), who was seduced by the Nazi party and who was, in her mind, a good thinker but poor judge. Arendt, a Jewess, fled Germany in 1933, later settling in the United States. Drawing on the philosophical traditions of Western thought, Arendt is attempting to explain and prevent another holocaust. A key question for Arendt is why ‘good people’ become bystanders to acts that diminish the humanity of others.

Reviving the *poiesis praxis* debate, Arendt distinguishes between labour as work and praxis as action. She points to the importance of others in the making of and understanding of our lives (plurality). Additionally, she points to the importance of human agency or freedom in action (natality), arguing that since humans have agency they have also a responsibility to judge. Coulter and Weins (2000) tell us that this understanding of action is controversial; for example, a Foucauldian analysis of power complexes would suggest that there are limitations to what an individual actor can do, as there are already conditions and circumstances in place when we are born into the world that we have to contend with. Arendt explains how the totalitarian regime of the Nazi party sought to expel Jews from the public sphere, serving to deny this basic aspect of human agency. This invisibility, in Arendt’s words, served to darken the public sphere.

“To be a judging actor involves considerations of publicity, but Arendt’s public is not an abstract public sphere, but a world of diverse and unique individuals, all capable of public agency” (Coulter and Weins, 2000:18).

*Can academia learn anything from Arendt's work?*

Personally I think we can. We must ask whether the separation of teaching and research is being organised and pursued in such a way as to render teachers in higher education invisible. We might also wonder about the effects of current changes in higher education that are being driven primarily on economic grounds and that may diminish the potential for 'human potential' and growth in the process. In my own organisation, plans to create a separate graduate school staffed solely by research active colleagues pose a real threat to teachers and students. This scenario, I suggest, will render all teachers who do not meet the RAE criteria invisible, and deny students the benefit of the experience that those practiced teachers have hitherto brought to the teaching and learning relationship.

Though we are told that good teachers will be recognised for the contribution they make to teaching and learning, what is ignored if not denied, in such a split in the organisation of teaching and research, is the possibility and indeed the desirability for academic staff (who have traditionally been seen as teachers) to develop through their scholarly activity and the self-study of their practice, skills and competencies, to also be recognised as research active, if they so wish. Ironically, management is asking how we could better link research to teaching and learning, yet the contradictions inherent in the graduate school proposal are not seen. Respect for diversity thus requires dialogue to understand diverse standpoints and the respect for uniqueness that does not collapse into an amalgam of the general. Despite the rhetoric of the institution on valuing diversity, this does not seem to be reflected either in the making of this policy or in its implementation to practice.

Just as the teacher to be a good judging actor must listen to students, visiting their points of view before, during and after the educational encounter, in turn, it

requires academic managers to do the same with their higher education teachers, recognising their plurality and natality; in other words their differences and their desire for agency. It requires a ‘visiting imagination’.

In this thesis I have shown through a self-study of my own practice, asking questions of the kind “How do I improve my practice here?”, that I have been working toward becoming a good judging actor; discovering what it means to have a visiting imagination as I work alongside my students, listen to their stories and find an ethic of care that contains them in good company. In so doing, I have sought to account for myself through my research activities by putting my ideas into the public domain in the form of conference papers, articles and other scholarly contributions; yet ironically I am still only assessed by my university as ‘research potential’. As such, I fear for my invisibility within the academic system, and find myself voicing those fears from the margins.

During Eichman’s trial for his war crimes, Arendt became curious about what made a thinking spectator? Arendt notes that Eichman had “an almost total inability to ever look at anything from the other fellow’s point of view” (1963:48). This is evidenced in its extremity by his account of the ‘Vienna’ episode, where acting on the orders of the Reich to make it ‘*juderein*’ (free of Jews), Eichman, pursuing this policy through forced emigration (which continued up to the fall of 1941), describes how “he and his men and the Jews were all pulling together” and whenever there were any difficulties the Jewish functionaries would come running to him “to unburden their hearts” (ibid.). From Eichman’s perspective, the desires to emigrate and the desire to see the Reich *juderein* coincided.

Arendt’s conclusions in respect of Eichman led her to observe that he refused to think about what he was doing, and that he was incapable of uttering a single word, even a stock phrase or cliché. “The longer one listened to him, the more

obvious it became that his inability to speak was closely connected with an inability to *think*, namely, to think from the standpoint of someone else” (Arendt, 1963:49). It was this lack of thinking that she saw as an explanation for his behaviour and lack of conscience, not some innate evilness. Arendt (1963:52) points to the mendacity of the German mind that she suggests became an integral part of the national German character. I cannot help wondering about the mendacity that is inherent in the management of UK higher education institutions.

*So where is there a lack of thoughtfulness in higher education?*

The first is with regard to assessment and its management in relation to the goals of learning, particularly where systems such as the modular framework get in the way of the very process of learning itself. Secondly, in the separation of teaching and research that perpetuates old hegemonies and privileges elite groups.

### **A Unified Approach to Teaching, Learning and Research**

Shulman (2000), in his role as President of the Carnegie Academy for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning, makes an impassioned argument for the unity of teaching and research, reminding us that we are members of two professions, our discipline and teaching. He calls for a deeper discussion of teaching in higher education, a dialogue in which our work becomes public, peer reviewed and critiqued, shared with other members of our profession so that they in turn can build on our work.

One of the consequences of running higher education along the same lines as a global business is that teachers are required to be compliant labourers, to stay ‘on message’ and deliver the curriculum, using what is often called best practice, but which may be little more than a convenient method of quality control. Such

practice is institutionalised in the QAA (Quality Assurance Assessments) that universities are now subject to in respect of the quality of their teaching and learning. Whilst I have no objection to the demand to improve quality in teaching and learning, on the contrary, I am passionate about it, I am concerned that the emphasis put on feeding the administrative system for quality assurance gets in the way of teachers spending time either privately or publicly in dialogue with others (students and colleagues) or with themselves reflecting on their educative practice and pursuing opportunities to use either visiting or critical imagination.

Davis (2003)<sup>106</sup> argues that in spite of teaching quality assessment, little appreciation is given to good teaching, not least because research funding continues to go to elite institutions that also operate the most highly selective admissions criteria. This, she points out, is demoralising for other staff who feel undervalued, which she suggests leads to an attitude of ‘why bother’.

The current environment in higher education seems designed to promote Eichmanism. The paradox is that at the same time, traditional university researchers continue to be rewarded by grant-funding committees and substantial time allowance devoted to research; conceived of as withdrawing from the world of action and generating knowledge.<sup>107</sup>

Educational judgment is at stake. We have an opportunity in higher education to challenge the hegemonies of research, and the self-study of our practice as educators is one way we can do that, and in the process help teachers and researchers to become both judging actors and judging spectators.

---

<sup>106</sup> In her article “Barriers to reflective practice”.

<sup>107</sup> Measured by the number of peer reviewed articles in academic journals, that might or might not be used to prescribe other people’s practice.

Lomax (1994), in her professorial inaugural lecture, suggests that we have to learn to accept difference and live constructively with it. Lomax cites MacIntyre's (1990) conception of a post-liberal university as being an imperative for survival in a postmodern world. In such a university:

“...rival standpoints exist - academics can enter into disagreement with one another - a place of constrained disagreement - a place where lecturers can initiate students into conflict rather than brainwash them into consensus” (Lomax, 1994:5).

At the end of the day, I believe most educators want to enhance the capacity of our students to think for themselves, to act with integrity in the world and to make their contribution in society as citizens, able to take wise decisions and be able to reflect on the integrity of their actions. It is unfortunate, if not ironic, that the very skills many organisations now recognise they need graduates to have are precisely those that their tutors have less freedom to exercise in their professional lives as a result of the commodification of the education system.

Critical education is important because it challenges the status quo and tutors are no less exempt from this than their students. What is at stake here is the very integrity of what a university education stands for.

Lomax (1994:5) suggests that the new universities are particularly well placed to challenge the old research hegemonies, despite what she describes as “the unashamed belligerence of the RAE”. Given the practice origins of many higher education tutors in the new universities, I would tend to agree with her. We are uniquely positioned to embrace an alternative approach to research and the new scholarship of teaching and learning. Addressing questions of the kind “How do I improve my practice?” is, I suggest, one way forward, serving to educate not only the tutor but educating the social formation in the process. Davis is less

optimistic, and despite the trend for reflective practice she argues that fundamentals need to be addressed such as:

- “Commitment to staff by policy makers and management alike.
- Recognition that staff cannot be all things to all people.
- Recognition that teaching is as valuable to the institution as research.
- Commitment of staff to their own development.
- Provision of appropriate resources.
- Understanding of reflective teaching” (Davis, 2003:253)

Indeed, Davis (ibid.) suggests that staff, “especially in the post-1992 universities” are being “pulled apart” by the current changes. She does have a valid point.

### **To Sum Up: ‘For Them’ Where to From Here?**

The creation of a good social order in higher education is a challenge of our time. Notwithstanding the need to address fundamentals of organisation and management in higher education, reflective practice does have a part to play and, as Lomax suggests, the conditions of change facing those in the new universities provide an excellent opportunity through which those committed to a new scholarship of teaching, learning and research can contribute to the education of the wider sphere.

Changing and educating the social formation is a major political endeavour and my contribution may be but a drop in the ocean. To date, I have taken small steps in this direction to educate and influence colleagues, both in my own institution and elsewhere, by organising an international conference in April 2001,<sup>108</sup> and with Diana Winstanley (one of the conference founders) producing two special

---

<sup>108</sup> On “Ethics and human resources management: professional development and practice”.



issues from that conference, the first being Winstanley and Hartog (2002)<sup>109</sup> and the second Hartog and Winstanley (2002).<sup>110</sup> At a recent ethics conference held in 2003,<sup>111</sup> along with four other contributors from Middlesex University, I co-presented a paper on the rhetoric and reality of work life balance with a colleague, which was later published (Frame and Hartog, 2003).

As well as making inroads into the HRM and ethics academic community, I have also sought to contribute to a conference on teaching business ethics. It was at this forum that I presented my paper<sup>112</sup> on critical action learning. Additionally, at a recent “Teaching Business Ethics” conference (November 2003) with my colleague, Frame, I presented a paper on reflective teaching and the opportunity provided by learning ‘in diversity’ that the challenges of the new university sector bring.<sup>113</sup> It is in this context that I hope to make a continuing contribution to academia as an educational action researcher committed to the improvement of my practice and to education and change of the social order.

## Conclusion

In this chapter I have described how my living theory inquiry has sought to influence and educate the social formation. I have explored this from the perspectives of the three key stakeholders in the personal process of research, ‘me, us and them’. In other words:

---

<sup>109</sup> In *Business Ethics, A European Review* (which included my own conference contribution, Hartog (2002a), “Becoming a reflective practitioner: a continuing professional development strategy through humanistic action research”).

<sup>110</sup> Selected papers for the *Business and Professional Ethics Journal*.

<sup>111</sup> Challenge of Business Ethics Conference, held at Selwyn College, Cambridge, 7-8 April 2003, combining the 7<sup>th</sup> European Business Ethics Network-UK (EBEN-UK) Annual Conference and the 5<sup>th</sup> Ethics and Human Resource Management Conference.

<sup>112</sup> See Appendix 1.

<sup>113</sup> This paper is currently being peer reviewed for a special issue of the *Teaching Business Ethics* journal.

- For me: I have explored the influence that my own inquiry has had on improving my practice, developing the skills of reflective practice and facilitating strategic action, in order that I might realise my values more fully in my practice.
- For us: I have described the influence that my inquiry has had for my students, in particular the facilitation of critical action learning and how that has enabled some students to make a real difference in their professional and organisational spheres through their intervention, a critique of practice and the process of organising reflection.
- For them: I have reflected on how educational judgment is threatened by the separation of teaching and research, and I have discussed the challenge of educating the wider political sphere. Furthermore, I have considered how my inquiry has enabled me to take the first steps, by taking my inquiry into the public domain and, in the process, showing what the new scholarship of teacher research can contribute.

## **END PIECE**

The purpose of this end piece is to provide a reflective summary of my research, reiterating the key themes that have emerged in the course of this inquiry, and bring closure to this thesis.

### **Introduction**

In this thesis I have presented a study of singularity, in other words, a self-study of a tutor working in higher education. As a form of educational action research it is distinguished by the values that I bring to my practice and which I have clarified over the course of this inquiry. I have constructed a living theory thesis that is informed by my desire to live my values in practice and informed by a synthesis of knowledge that integrates the ideas of others into my thinking; ideas, in particular, that have resonated with my beliefs, values and educative purposes, informed my thinking and helped to move my inquiry on. I have presented an account that provides descriptions and explanations of my practice within a framework of action and reflection. This account has been self-critical of my practice, in response to experiencing myself as a living contradiction when I have denied or experienced the denial of my espoused values in practice, and furthermore it has taken a critical view of the wider context of the academy in which my practice is based.

### **Key Themes of This Thesis**

In a living theory thesis, themes do not simply emerge from findings at the end of a research project. Rather, I suggest, they are woven into and through the very fabric of the thesis itself, and I believe they emerge in the conduct of the inquiry both in the purposes and intentions that underlie the values, history and knowing of the persons involved. My purpose here then, is simply to gather the fragments

and weave the themes into an end piece, rather like one might weave the pieces of a quilt together.

### **Weave And Mend**

“So weave and mend,  
weave and mend,  
Gather the fragments  
Save and mend the golden circle sisters  
Weave and mend  
Weave and mend.  
Sacred sisters weave and mend.”

These words are from the Native American women of Vancouver Island.<sup>114</sup>

### **Finding Voice**

I first heard the above arrangement sung by a student on MAPOD 2, who was a member of Frankie Armstrong’s women’s choir. Frankie Armstrong is noted for her work with ordinary people as opposed to professional singers. She believes that everyone has the ability to sing and give voice. With her coaching, women who might otherwise still their voice, develop the confidence to create together the conditions whereby they are able to give outstanding public performances. The student in question was very quiet, someone you would not ordinarily imagine singing in public, yet at the end of the first block week on MAPOD she felt able to share this song with her cohort, telling the group that she had made a connection between her experience of finding voice in Frankie Armstrong’s choir and the possibility space that she felt was being created on the MAPOD programme. Perhaps by coincidence, the evening before driving home from the course, I had turned on the car radio to hear Frankie Armstrong being interviewed. I was struck by the apparent connection between her work and mine in respect of finding voice and creating the space and conditions in which

---

<sup>114</sup> Arranged by Frankie Armstrong, on “Ways of Seeing”, Harbour Town Records (1990).

individuals in the company of others could find their voice, and reclaim a sense of self, voice and mind. The metaphor of finding voice and the journey from silence to voice has been a constant theme throughout this thesis. The values which I have brought to my practice and clarified in the course of this inquiry have kept in the forefront of my purposes the aim of valuing and facilitating the learner to give voice to their lived experience, and in doing so, returning the knower to the known.

### **Women's Ways of Knowing and the Maternal Voice**

The words of the Native American women have resonated with the journey that my inquiry has taken, in that it highlights the distinctive nature of women's ways of knowing. I began this study as a quest to find a way of being in educative relations that improved the rationality and justice of my practice, but significantly my journey has also embraced my lived experience as a knower, drawing on the experience of the maternal voice. In the process of this inquiry, I have come to recognise the difference that the voice of the mother makes in the academy, responding to the relational needs of the students with an ethic of care and with the distinctive discipline of thinking that promotes nurturance, preservation and growth. Thus, women's ways of knowing and the maternal voice have been key themes to emerge in this inquiry.

## **Listening: The Other Side of Silence**

“Listen....

I do not know if you have ever examined,  
How you listen, it doesn't matter to what,  
Whether to a bird, to the wind in the leaves,  
To the rushing waters, or how you listen in a  
Dialogue with yourself, to you....real  
Communication can only take place  
When there is silence.”

*Krishnamurti*

“The listen” from Krishnamurti conveys what the qualities of reflective practice mean to me now, when I am truly attending to my practice and holding my students in an educative space in which they can be truly heard by their peers, by me and by themselves as they grapple with their learning, reclaim the integrity of their minds and find their voice. This quality of silent communication can, I suggest, touch the source of our humanity. Working with silence and exploring its oppressive nature has been a key theme in this thesis, both for me and for my students, yet it is the flipside of silence that has led me to discover a way of being in educative relations with my students. This way of being and doing I have described as an ethic of care in the teaching and learning relationship, informed by a way of knowing that is embodied in the aesthetics of my practice. This knowledge, born of the tacit dimension, has through this inquiry helped me to craft what I have called my connoisseur's eye. This way of knowing and being in educative relations with my students is infused with the personal knowledge born of my lived experience of what it means to be woman and a mother.

## **Community Building: Learning in Good Company**

Like hooks (1991), I want to speak of homeplaces as a site of resistance, where care and nurturing prevails in the face of oppression. This is the context for learning I believe the academy could create if the voice of the mother is heard in

education. I believe that this is not only possible but desirable if education is to serve democracy in our time. I have carried such beliefs forward in the context of nurturing and building a learning community on the MAPOD programme, where in the company of colleagues and students we created a liberating educative space for individuals and the collective. It is with this good company, where each person is acting in the best interests of the other, that I undoubtedly did some of my best work.

### **Making a Difference**

What does all this matter? Research that seeks to improve the practice of a tutor in higher education goes to the heart of what educative purposes are all about. In this thesis I have argued a case for education for democracy, one in which I have encouraged my students to take a critical stance to their work and recognise that their opportunities for freedom and development as individuals are interconnected with the lives and opportunities of others in their organisations and in the wider social sphere. In helping students find their voice and by returning them to their stories, so that they might experience themselves as more complete human beings, mended from those experiences that had been diminishing of their humanity, I believe I have made a difference to what it means to be in educative relations with my students. In taking this ethic of care forward in their own work through the process of critical action and reflection, they have in turn educated their professional and social spheres.

The work of MAPOD, I suggest, offers a business school an ethic of practice that would contribute to a new academy that is built on the basis of values concerned with freedom, democracy and sustainable growth that recognises the overlapping nature of the stakes we hold as individuals, workers, organisations and society. The challenge that remains involves educating the wider academy to recognise the value of teaching and learning, and the importance of tutors

researching their practice, thus recognising the need to value with equal measure the scholarship of such practice alongside traditional research activities. In a small way, I believe that this thesis can make a contribution to such educative challenge by bringing my research through publications into the wider academy and public domain.



## **APPENDIX 1**

**PAPER PRESENTED 1 JUNE 2001  
AT EBEN-UK CONFERENCE**

***DRAFT WORKING PAPER IN PREPARATION  
FOR FUTURE PUBLICATION***

# **CRITICAL ACTION LEARNING: TOWARDS BEST PRACTICE IN THE TEACHING OF BUSINESS ETHICS**

*EBEN-UK Conference. Teaching Business Ethics: Perspectives on best practice -*

*City University 1<sup>st</sup> June 2001*

*Mary Hartog  
Senior Lecturer  
Middlesex University Business School  
The Burroughs  
Hendon  
NW4 4BT  
Tel: 020-8362-5876  
Fax: 020-8202-1539  
M.Hartog@mdx.ac.uk*

## **Abstract**

In this paper I seek to explore the case for 'critical action learning' (Wilmot 1994) as a 'best practice' intervention strategy for the teaching and learning of business ethics for management and professional development. In doing so, I draw on my own practice of applying this approach to the 'teaching' of ethics in business and professional practice with my own students on the part time 'MA in Personal and Organisational Development', (for practicing managers and professionals) to highlight what is involved for both tutors and students in applying this approach in practice.

My approach to the 'teaching and learning' of business ethics builds on Anthony's critique 'Management Education: Ethics versus Morality (1998), in which he acknowledges that there is an alienation problem between ethicists / philosophers and managers. He argues that this is a problem for educators not least in respect of what and how we should teach business ethics. Indeed his argument goes on to suggest that we should leave well alone, avoiding any 'prescriptive' educational endeavour, rather, he suggests that we should look to our students to guide us, by helping them draw out and learn from real live work based issues that go to the heart of the matter asking the question, 'What is the nature of the ethical problem here'?

Anthony suggests that the real business of teaching ethics is “grounded in the mundane and material world of everyday management processes”, where moral relations are to be found’. He further suggests that the role of educators be a facilitative one that engages with practitioner - student accounts of this world and recommends ‘an exchange in a discourse of the old fashioned sense of the word’ (1998:279) thus enabling theory to be grounded in the professional and organisational world that the manager occupies. It is this kind of discourse I believe that is central to the effectiveness of action learning, where fellow students and tutor facilitate the learning of the practitioner – student by providing both support and challenge to the thinking and quality of reflection on practice (action) to the practitioner – student, as he or she grapples with the problem or dilemma with which they are confronted.

Critical action learning as defined by Wilmot (1994) challenges the potential for ethical neutrality inherent in more conventional action learning interventions in that it depends on ‘critical reflection on practice’, which includes being prepared to challenge the status quo and or taken for granted assumptions, as well as drawing on critical theoretical traditions that question and uncover the assumptions or rhetoric inherent in much conventional management theory. Furthermore, it extends the ‘curriculum’ beyond the definition of the manager and the organisation to include in its scope society and the wider stake-holding community. As such, it places the ‘management learning’ and development agenda beyond the individual manager (student – practitioner), to one that is interdependent with the well being and ‘learning’ of society at large.

In reflection on my own experience and that of my students, I ask the question ‘Is this approach to the ‘teaching’ of ethics in practice an aspiration or is it a model for good practice’?

### **Key Words**

Critical action learning  
Critical reflection on action  
Communitarianism  
Ethics in management practice  
Management education  
Management learning  
Moral Agency  
Moral relations  
Stakeholding  
Teaching business ethics

## **Introduction**

I open this paper by providing a context for my 'teaching of business ethics' within the MA in Personal and Organisational Development, a programme that I lead at MUBS (Middlesex University Business School) for practicing managers, in which critical action learning is the vehicle for teaching learning and assessment. I proceed to explore the link between ethics, morality and management practice as described by Anthony (1998). In my descriptions and explanations of critical action learning I draw out a theoretical underpinning for this approach to 'teaching business ethics' and I advocate that critical action learning as a teaching learning and assessment strategy, as used on MA POD serves to bridge the gap or so called 'alienation problem' between ethicists and practitioners, Sorell (1998:17), in that it facilitates the teaching of business ethics in terms of the real issues and ethical dilemmas that managers face in their daily work.

In examining the process of critical action learning I highlight how it focuses the attention of the practitioner not only on the 'doing' skills of the manager but also on the very nature of their 'being'. Furthermore, I explore the importance of the 'maturity' of the practitioner manager in his or her endeavour to develop the reflective skills necessary to balance their actions, and the iterative process of action and reflection as they develop their own ethics of practice.

Finally I explore what the process of reflective practice entails and provide some supporting evidence from a student project to demonstrate that critical action learning can offer a viable approach to the teaching of business ethics for the practicing manager.

## **Teaching and learning context**

As a teacher educator in higher education I work primarily with practicing managers and professionals in postgraduate and professional education on courses such as the MBA (Master of Business Administration) the CIPD (Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development) and a specialist Masters degree aimed at the development of people and organisations known as the MAPOD (Masters in Personal and Organisational Development). It is in the context of this latter programme with its students centred teaching learning and assessment strategy that the 'teaching of business ethics' has evolved in response to the real live problems that the students draw on from their practice as managers and professionals in organisations.

## **The MAPOD - Who is it For?**

It is aimed at experienced practitioners, senior managers, trainers, professional educators and consultants who aim to influence and shape the learning of people and organisations. MAPOD facilitates the learning of these students in developing the skills and knowledge to create 'learningful cultures' in their organisations. It helps students learn how to critically evaluate their own learning and that of others. The approach involves action learning of live personal, professional and organisational issues, with each person being supported and challenged in a tutor facilitated action-learning set.

## **The Programme Structure**

The MAPOD is a two-year block release programme designed to support the process of action learning and 'reflective practice' of busy senior professionals. Each cohort consists of approximately 20 students per annum. The size of the group enables a close working alliance to be developed between all concerned. The blocks have a modular theme, which forms part of the whole programme and provides a framework for continuing – systematic development of the student's action learning projects. Students are encouraged to contribute to the design and delivery of learning events during the blocks and as such I foster a 'co-operative' approach to learning based on Herons (1989:23) model of facilitator styles. This supports a teaching and learning philosophy that argues that students learn best when they are engaged in live and meaningful learning and that they are capable of being self-directing. Furthermore, the assessment strategy incorporates a process of self, peer and tutor assessment. In my experience, such an approach provides for a formative learning process for adult learners and entails a degree of power sharing as well as a sense of shared responsibility for the learning of self and others. Rogers (1983:158) states that "The evaluation of one's own learning is one of the major means by which self-initiated learning becomes also responsible learning". Since the learning is based on their practice, this places responsibility for action and change and the development of an ethic of practice in their hands. Commonly on educational initiatives that move toward developing student autonomy on learning, Boud (1988:39) states:

"What is important in my view, though, is the attitude of teachers towards their students. It is not any technique of reading method that is primarily needed, but an attitude of

acceptance and appreciation of the views, desires and frames of reference of learners. Perhaps the single central quality which fosters autonomy is the quality of the relationship between teachers and learners which develops through this acceptance”.

In recognising the potential debilitating affect of traditional learning experiences on student autonomy the co-operative approach provides a happy medium drawing on the ‘expertise ‘ of the tutor and at the same time sending out the message to the students that I appreciate that they have a good deal of skill and knowledge to contribute, as well. By the end of the first year students are generally driving the design of the blocks.

During the blocks we take the opportunity of learning from our own ‘personal and organisational’ processes as a group. One of the unique features and strengths of MAPOD is that it nurtures and fosters the spirit of a ‘learning community’ that symbolically engages in collective and collaborative process reviews of our own learning as specific timetabled events during the blocks and in the action learning sets. Thus encouraging the continual building of dialogue in the collective learning environment and the individual skills of self-reflexive inquiry.

In between the blocks we meet by mutual agreement in action learning sets comprising of approximately 5 people. This provides each individual with support and challenge, in order to progress and produce individual written work for assessment, based on written accounts of live work issues and projects. It is in the action learning sets that students draw out and learn to critique their own ‘practice knowledge and working theories’ and explore the models and theories of others through literature, from which individuals develop a new synthesis for practice.

Whilst the teaching and learning curriculum is not overtly concerned with the teaching of business ethics the underlying philosophy of the programme and its teaching learning and assessment strategy all serve to promote a stakeholder approach to the teaching and learning agenda, within a framework of communitarianism and which reflects the relational and human face of organisation. I would argue that students draw on this experiential process as stakeholders in their own learning as they reflect on their own management practice and work based problems/dilemmas. According to Winstanley and Woodall:

“Communitarianism is one philosophy that focuses on the shared values of individuals in a community of purpose. As with stakeholding, this is a philosophy for life, the individual, group, organisational, and societal level” (2000:15).

As members of overlapping communities managers begin to appreciate a connectedness between the personal, professional, organisational and social contexts of their lives, through critical action learning.

“We are all members of overlapping communities and the workplace is one such community of interests, communities of purpose emphasise shared values, a sense of belonging and inclusiveness” Etzioni (cited in Winstanley and Woodall 2000:15).

### **Ethics Morality and Management Practice**

Drawing on Smart's (1996:xv1) definition of ethics, Anthony argues that ethics is a theory or philosophy, which serves to systematise moral values. As such, he describes ethics as 'the control desk of society' in that it legislates and codifies moral behaviour, creating social order out of potential chaos. He describes the expectation of moral behaviour as coexistent with the survival of communities. Furthermore, he argues that moral imperatives lie at the heart of 'concrete productive exchange'. Anthony (1998:274). Not only is this true for society but also I would argue for communities of practice, such as managerial and associated professional communities.

Anthony regards managers as moral agents, their role being based on an acceptance of moral relationships. He disagrees with those who argue that management is no place for moral relations, if it was he argues we could assume that the world was 'going to hell'. Though he does not favour the traditional teaching of ethics, he is in no doubt that managers need to be educated. Indeed, he goes as far as to suggest that 'the world requires it' and he points to the dangers of according power without responsibility.

“Power without responsibility is notoriously dangerous both for those who exercise it and for those who have to submit to it, and the consequences of not addressing the danger go far beyond the confines of the managers immediate perception of their role. So, whether the managers know or like it or not, the rest of the world require them to be educated”. Anthony (1998:270).

What he proposes is an ethical education based on critique of the live 'real' practice context that managers work in. The quality of critique that he suggests necessary is more than that commonly practiced in Western education. Rather, he suggests a critique that exposes 'the unreality of management pretensions and the

falsity of the texts on which they rest'. He argues that business schools are guilty of playing a duplicitous game, on the one hand offering consultancy on so called 'best practice' frequently through culture programmes and on the other, engaging in post modern critiques of the same. 'Critical management' he states, 'is not helpful to managers. Its stance is essentially derisive to the purpose of their enterprise and to their performance in its pursuit' Anthony (1998:273).

"The education of managers must concern their reality, the practice of their complex craft, more art than science, akin often to acting in a play which they have plotted under an uncertain direction toward an unknown conclusion. Their education must help them to understand their reality and, if it is fiction, like all fiction, it must reveal its moral content". Anthony (1998:274).

Action learning as a process is geared toward understanding and insight for effective action rather than underpinning knowledge and skill that are the primary focus of traditional management education programmes. The founder of action learning, Reg Revans developed a learning equation:  $L = P+Q$ . Revans (1982) believed that managers learn best from and through each other as they grapple with their real live problems. He coined the phrase 'comrades in adversity' to describe the process of shared – social learning that takes place in the action learning sets as managers provide each other with support and challenge to see their unique organisational or practice problems from the perspectives of others. The 'Q' in his equation stands for questioning insight, in other words, the lever for critical and reflective practice. The 'P' represents programmed knowledge, what we traditionally think of as teaching and learning. Whilst Revans did not dismiss the use or need for some programmed knowledge, he was quite clear that on its own it was not enough to facilitate effective learning in practice.

Anthony reminds us that 'reality' is neither 'finite' nor necessarily 'reliable'. All 'reality' has both its shadow (Plato) and is reflective of the constraints of our mind (Kant).

By focusing on what happens in management practice argues Anthony, we can see what is going on as opposed to what ought to be going on and we will see that management practice engages in political process that require the exercise of moral judgment. When we apply this in the conduct of our own practice we ask the question 'How can I improve my practice'? Similarly we might notice the gap between our own rhetoric and our practice. Whitehead (2000) calls this a 'living contradiction'.



“All I am meaning by ‘I’ as a living contradiction is the experience of holding together two mutually exclusive opposite values” Whitehead (2000:93). He further suggest that when we have an experience of this kind we tend to imagine a way forward to resolve that contradiction in our practice.

## **Why is Action Learning an Effective Vehicle for the Teaching of Business Ethics?**

Only by action can one test ones ideas, beliefs and their underlying assumptions. The relationship between theory and practice is of significance here. It is not uncommon in H.E. to find theory and practice viewed as polar opposites, as though they were separate entities, the emphasis being on the academic (theorising). In industry the reverse could be said to be true of the managerial tendency to action. Freire (1985) argues that we need to respect the unity between theory and practice and he draws our attention to the limits of taking one position.

### **“Verbalism Lacks Action – action lacks critical reflection on action”**

Clearly we need both action and reflection to develop a critical view and thus take effective action. Thus knowledge becomes a dynamic commodity and not static or pre-packaged one; and thus opens to reconfiguration.

In facilitating student learning in this way it is important to understand that the application of theory to practice is inadequate, as it does not guarantee the testing out process central to action learning. On MAPOD, I encourage students to draw out their own ‘living theories’ Whitehead (1989) from the ground of their own experience and in the first instance to subject them and their practice to public scrutiny. The idea of a living theory is that each person has a conception of what they do, what works and where they stand on issues, in other words, developing or reflecting on, their ethical position.

Furthermore, it is important to recognise that each organisational practice context is different and as such, students are encouraged to pay attention to their ‘position, purposes and context’ as frame of reference for their work. Only after they have done this do I encourage them to explore relevant literature. The aim here, is to facilitate students develop and find their own voice, using literature as appropriate, to inform, illuminate and critique their practice. Thus they develop an awareness of what others have to contribute whilst learning not to be terrorised by the literature.

The action learning process builds on the Kolb learning cycle commonly used in 'management learning' e.g. which has four stages: experience, reflection, abstraction and testing. In contrast, the Revans cycle begins with experience (an activity or an event), the reflective phase includes a commitment and decision to experiment; the next stage being experimentation; this is followed by reflection and analysis; and finally new actions. (Cited in Weinstein, (1995:57). In addition to this 'outer process' action learning involves an 'inner process'. The reflective process not only addresses our actions but also our thinking, beliefs and ideas. Stuart and Logan (1987) in a critique of models of action learning that overemphasise 'the action' point out that many managers are already overly inculcated in organisational cultures that privilege action and ignore reflection, thus demonstrating the enormity of the task in developing 'reflective practitioners'.

Furthermore, they differentiate between action and experience:

"Activity is focused upon and enacted in an outer world, whilst experience is located in an individual's inner world..." Logan and Stuart (1987)

Weinstein (1995:54) describes the inner experiential cycle as beginning with insight or unease; the development of or a desire to change; a stage of risk taking, developing courage or responsibility; the development of understanding and insight; and finally, transformation. Weinstein argues that:

"The challenge for action learning is to enable people to be effective, not simply for the duration of the programme but for the rest of their lives". Weinstein, (1995:55).

I would describe this approach to action learning as a 'critical' approach located in praxis.

Willmott (1994:105-136) in his critique of 'modern' management education views conventional approaches to action learning as problem solving technologies and where self-development/professional effectiveness is of primary importance. By contrast, he distinguishes critical approaches to action learning in a wider context in which self and social development are interdependent. Not only do tutors/facilitators bring their influence to bear but other stakeholders do as well. In addition to 'problem solving' critical action learning involves an interplay of reflection upon practice and the application of ideas drawn from critical traditions, as such received wisdom is subject to critical scrutiny.

In my experience as students learn the skills of action learning as a form of critique to practice they develop the skills and discipline necessary to undertake a systematic and rigorous approach to their management practice.

Vince and Martin (1993) argue that action learning developers need to go 'behind and beyond' Kolb's learning cycle to appreciate the political and emotional nature of this type of learning intervention. This is because the Kolb cycle focuses on the rational cyclical process of learning from experience and fails to mention the emotional and political aspects of this experiential learning process. The development of an ethic of practice is thus not only a cognitive learning process but also, one that requires the development of emotional intelligence as well, placing the manager in a relational world.

This emphasis on emotional intelligence is not just a fashionable point of view. But rather it offers a perspective, which is particularly important where the practitioner decides to question current organisational practice, and with matters like ethics in business, this may involve pointing out the gap between organisational rhetoric and reality. This can be a risky endeavour for the practitioner. For example, suppose the practitioner facilitates a process of employee empowerment and participation in the workplace, a strategy common to organisations trying to embrace organisational learning seriously. Suppose this organisation also has a policy or code of business ethics and it emerges that the employees are dissatisfied with the code, suppose they recognise it to be rhetoric (this is what Willmott (1998) describes as descriptive ethical codes), what is the professional practitioner to do if in the communication of the employee perspective they risk putting themselves (careers) at risk.

Willmott (1998) describes three ethical perspectives from which codes of ethics are drawn up and used. These are: descriptive, normative, and analytical. In descriptive codes, which are often used as rhetorical devices, they provide a descriptive account of the organisations approach to business and ethics, often included in mission statements. These can be positive educative tools for employees to know where the company stands on these matters, thus proving benchmarks and standards for good practice. However, the downside can be that it absolves the employees from thinking about these issues for themselves, typically, this leaves the majority of employees believing what they are told to believe, whether it is true or not. Where the codes are simply rhetorical devices, this may result in no debate (normative ethics) where what is right and what is wrong is open to debate and different interpretations. This is where employees or customers as stakeholders

might influence change towards a normative position in business practice. Analytical ethics will question the normative yardsticks themselves. This is what a company really committed to the development of people and organisations (organisational learning) would be prepared to do.

Vince and Martin, observe that experiential learning initiatives like action learning that 'place emphasis on the responsibilities of the learner, create anxiety', Vince and Martin (1993:208). In my experience this is absolutely true. Furthermore, it places additional demand on tutors to model the process and engage in their own journey of reflective practice. It further requires them to develop the emotional capacity to facilitate a 'deep' process of student centred learning that honours both the emotional as well as the cognitive learning process. In practice, this involves paying attention to a 'living learning contract' with individuals so that they can determine their boundaries around their personal professional and academic development goals. In the same vein, Schön (1987:94) suggests that the student 'must make a willing suspension of disbelief' and place his 'trust' in the tutor.

## **Doing and Being**

Drawing on Clarkson's definition of organisation "An organization is human relationships writ large" Clarkson (1995:26), we can see that we have a hand in the world that we create and that our lived realities do not exist in isolation. Management learning and Professional development traditionally engages in the transfer of skills and knowledge for the acquisition of technical competence for the 'doing' self. In comparing professional and personal development, Clarkson (1995:63) notes that personal development by contrast serves to integrate skills and knowledge both old and new with the self and is as concerned with 'being' as it is with the 'doing' self. Furthermore, she notes that professional development tends not to engage feelings whereas engaging feelings is she argues, at some stage fundamental to the process of personal development.

Such a critique toward an ethics practice is thus not just about the rhetoric of management but of our lived reality. Given our part in constructing our realities, developing the capacity for critique in respect of our own view and understanding of our world does in my experience requires a certain maturity on the part of the practitioner. In my experience as educator it is not a capacity or practice that relatively inexperienced practitioners are ready for in educational / developmental terms, this is not to suggest that inexperienced practitioners are necessarily unaware of the moral basis of the work that they are engaged in but there would

seem to be a certain naivety about the difference between espoused theory and theory in use and a defensiveness regarding the degree of anxiety and uncertainty that this possibility and understanding of self and organisation provokes.

Rogers believed that significant learning came from experience that could not be taught one by another.

“Anything that can be taught is inconsequential and has little influence on behaviour. Such learning. (Significant learning) is self discovered, self appropriated learning” Rogers (1967:226). For Rogers this involved a reconstruction of the person, in effect, his outlooks attitudes and values.

“This would be a true reconstruction of experience, it would be learning in a real sense” Rogers (1967:302).

### **What is a Mature Practitioner?**

For Rowan (2001:10) maturity involves a shift in consciousness. He argues that we go through a series of transitions in our lives from symbiosis with the mother to separation, and from body-self as child to adolescence to mental ego. The next stage he argues is one of mature ego, which he also calls the ‘real self’. In each transition Rowan suggests that we have to revise our conceptions of self.

“The actual experience of real self is, I have argued a mystical experience. This is the feeling of being in touch with my own center, my inner identity, my true self, my authenticity – that self which lies behind or beyond all self-images or self-concepts or sub-personalities. It is what Assagioli (1975) calls the ‘I’- the center point of the whole personality. It is what Wilber (1996a) calls the complete bodymind unity. It is a developmental step, principally dis-continuous, involving step-jump rather than gradual form (Boydell and Pedler, 1981). We can now say ‘I am I’, and it means something to us”. Rowan (2001:115).

This is an existential self and central to existential insight is the belief that we are responsible for being ourselves. It is this quality that makes us fully human. Rowan suggests that this implies a commitment to ‘get inside ones own experience’. It is this commitment that is at the heart of humanistic action research, critical action learning and self-reflexive inquiry. Rejecting post-modern accounts that deny the existence of self or reduce it to a mere text, Rowan (2001:120), states that ‘the real self is not a concept but an experience’. Critical action learning enables us to own our experience in a new way.

The shift from mental ego to the mature ego involves a change in our relationship to power. Citing Rogers (1978), Rowan contends that power for the mental ego is associated with 'power over' others, whereas, power at the stage of a mature ego involves 'power with others' or power with-in. It is this difference in consciousness that is central to a humanistic – participative worldview and which underpins the philosophy of humanistic action research and I would argue, critical action learning, facilitating the (student) manager to construct an ethic of practice.

Critical action learning as a form of human inquiry can be understood within cycles of action and reflection but it is more than a project, it involves a 'dialectical engagement with the world' Rowan (in Reason and Rowan, 1981). Taking such a stance toward the development of people and organisations has profound implications for practice such as the participation of others both at the project planning stage and the communication phase, changing the nature of power relations in the organisation.

### **Reflective understanding and responsibility towards an ethics of lived professional and management practice.**

Developing the skills of reflective inquiry is central to this approach. Recognising that each persons approach will be different and distinctive, Marshall (2000) offers some insights based on her own experience as researcher and educator of what self-reflective inquiry might involve. Marshall considers how one might do self-reflective inquiry well and how one might give rich sense making accounts, which avoid the ego collapsing into defensive routines.

The process of inquiry itself involves judgments, which I would argue are themselves based in moral relations. Skilful inquiry thus takes time, commitment and practice. Marshall describes a dynamic process of inquiry that is framed by inner and outer arcs of attention (Marshall, 2000:433). Inner arcs of attention would include noticing the self engage in processes of meaning making, framing and speaking out. Like Marshall, these have been important for me for example, in facilitating my inquiry in the conduct of my own practice and appreciation of life history in my practice and in the adoption of heuristics such as 'the maternal voice in the academy' as I come to notice and name a practice toward an ethics of care. Therein, lies the educative challenge for tutors to develop their practice as facilitators of student learning in the 'teaching of business ethics' as they enable their students to clarify and work through their 'position' on ethical human relations at work and on their own 'moral agency'. Marshall suggests that inner

arcs of attention can help us notice our taken for granted assumptions and our ways of knowing. By contrast, outer arcs of attention involve “reaching outside myself in some way” Marshall (2000:434). These arcs may include processes of ‘continuing education’. I use this term loosely, for example, it may involve getting to grips with the ideas of others or taking an aspect of the inquiry that is causing some perturbation or curiosity into another iterative cycle of action and reflection. (Critical action learning does not need to be located in a formal education programme as it is a vehicle based on and through reflection on practice. It can be used as a planned approach to management learning in organisations).

In my own case feedback from critical friends including fellow tutors and students has caused me to work with felt perturbations such as my struggle to find voice and come to the public domain, pushing my inquiry onward and deeper.

Marshall locates self reflective inquiry within the cycle of action and reflection as described by Rowan. Commenting on the rhythm and discipline of moving back and forth between action and reflection she argues that each inquiry has its own ‘momentum’ and so calls for different forms of attention and experimentation.

It is she argues a ‘choiceful’ activity, moving around the cycle of being, project planning, encounter and communication, as described in Rowan’s (1981) action research cycle – ‘dialectical engagement with the world’. “It can become a way of life, a form of inquiring (professional) practice”. Marshall, (2000:434).

Marshall identifies how her inquiring self is facilitated by different ways of being. These she describes as being based in Bakan’s (1966) ‘duality of human existence’, known as agency and communion. Narrowly defined these are representative of masculine and feminine ways of being.

In my own case my agency was assertive in shaping the context for my PhD inquiry on the MA in Personal and Organisational Development and I have been exploring what an ‘ethic of care’ might involve by a strategy of being in communion with my students as I seek to get along side them as I listen to and seek to hear well their accounts of their practice inquiries.

Marshall describes these two different ways of being as being both active and receptive. Marshall, (2000:435). Additionally, Marshall highlights the importance of inquiring purposefully and with intent. Determining purposes is essential in developing a strategy towards one’s self-directed learning, providing students with a framework, which can guide their reflection on and in action. Developing an

ethics of practice is in my view an emergent process, which students come to embrace as they develop and hone their skills as reflective practitioners. Her own account suggests that research needs to be generative taking account of the interpersonal, social, political and organisational contexts, as appropriate. Thus knowledge of the outside world, i.e. 'What is going on in the wider business and social environment, what issues are in the forefront of public concern'?

Finally, Marshall describes 'inquiry as a life process', not just a personal – professional process, drawing on her own account she notes how her inner reflections on her career enable her to look outward and act. Marshall's account is a product of a reflective sense of self and provides a generative map for facilitating reflective inquiry skill and management development.

### **What evidence can I show you that Critical action learning facilitates the teaching of business ethics?**

I asked myself the question, to what extent is this approach to the 'teaching of business ethics' aspirational or a model for good practice? To highlight the potential of this approach, I offer the following example drawn from the project of a student recently presented for Master's dissertations and from my tutor assessment report on his work, as evidence in support of my claims. I have purposefully chosen this example from a student who is a practicing senior manager working at the hard edge of the 'for profit' sector to illustrate what developing moral agency means for him in practice

#### **Stone N. (2001) 'Journey of an Active listener'**

##### **The context**

"I enjoyed this dissertation account very much as it conveys a practitioner's journey of purposeful and planned practice improvement. Nigel sets out his stall to become an 'active listener', by which he expresses a desire to develop his own practice and leadership style to listen to what his colleagues (500 subordinates) need from him and his management team, in the context of a period of long term change in the business at \*\*\*\* Bank - offshore investments, where a strategy of 'value based management' is to be pursued, with the aim of increasing the bottom line substantially over the next few years. Nigel's role is that of Operations Director for this business unit.



Confronted with a piece of secondary data by way of an employee opinion survey, Nigel determines a need to dig deeper to understand the responses to the survey, which indicated a dissatisfaction with some aspects of: management practice, leadership and organisation culture/support. Nigel decided to follow up with his own local focus group in order that he and his management team could both understand better the feelings behind these responses and begin to create a supportive culture of employment during the coming 4 years, during which time the revised operating model for the business will be developed. Nigel undertakes a classic action research intervention, with his emphasis on practice improvement and continuous improvement. He further develops his framing by reference to the work of Senge *et al.*'s (1994) disciplines for organisational learning, focusing on personal mastery, shared vision and team learning, all of which are clearly relevant to his vision and goals.

Nigel opens his dissertation with a poem from Moreno (1969) conveying a 'position' - and intentions in this project which he describes as 'putting yourself in the others shoes for mutual benefit' in order to develop a more human centred leadership approach. The moral of the poem being to see each other through each other's eyes.

The first two chapters set the scene clarifying the purposes of this account and his reflection on practice, considering what it means to be a leader that listens 'active listener' and the implications that has for coaching and developing people at work. Nigel sets out who his stakeholders are in this research and identifies his colleagues as significant stakeholders, as well as the shareholders whose primary concern is profit. He further points out there are overlapping stakeholder interests between employees and shareholders. Using the framing of 'me us and them' (Reason and Marshall (1987), Nigel includes himself, his action learning set, and the banks management team, as well as his operational team as potential stakeholders in the outcomes and learning from this project.

During this scene setting Nigel reflects on his early career with the bank, his early experience of education and his perceived transition from manager to leader. He suggests that his own career development was shaped by a pedagogical approach to learning which equipped him to follow the rules. He draws on Knowle's (1985) comparative model of pedagogy and andragogy in learning, to illustrate his argument, PG 28. He reflects on how this earned him early promotion in the ranks at the bank but how it was achieved at a cost to his personal and work-based relationships, earning him the reputation as 'Hitler' amongst his colleagues. He describes how his style tended to be one of 'over management'.

“I was clearly being responsible for taking ownership for delivering the results but at what cost to my reputation as a human being? Was I becoming simply a tool of the organisation, being led and clearly not listening to others? I had not considered the need to share my thoughts about what was to be achieved either for me, or collectively, or more fundamentally consulted about the systems I felt were appropriate”.

As he reflects on his early leadership style:

“I believe that my natural style has in the past been built around the ‘coercive/authoritative style of manager, as distinct from leader, coupled with a strong tendency to ‘over manage’. This did not create the space for individual growth and personal development amongst my team, or perhaps for me as an individual” PG 39. He goes on to suggest that he has shifted toward a ‘democratic, pacesetting and affiliate style’, today.

He also discusses his experience of being invited to apply for redundancy a few years ago and his shock at the lack of regard for him as a person in the way this matter was handled, despite his years of loyalty and the fact that at the time he had tackled perhaps the most challenging operational management task of merging six branches together.

He concludes this section by reflecting on his personal values in his quest to be an ‘active listener’ and draws on the work of Lewin and Regine (1999) on paradoxical leadership, that requires, ‘a different way of being that leads to a different way of doing’. Nigel is clearly aware of and has utilised relevant literature and current concepts of best practice, e.g. organisational learning to illustrate and frame his purpose and position.

His research chapter restates clearly his purposes and the focus of this research in following up and delving deeper into the feedback that was given in the employee opinion survey and to take action on the basis of the feedback given in the focus group. Nigel invites his management team to form a focus group to explore the initial survey findings, which Nigel augments with a number of questions of his own and by ‘cutting the original data’ and setting comparative and benchmark score for the responses, the benchmarks indicating positive and negative levels of satisfaction. He gives a very fulsome account of how he invites his senior local manager to facilitate this focus group with him, encouraging ‘buy in’ from him to ensure that action and outcomes are followed up on the ground. He describes this as a journey of shared visioning in which there is a need to create a culture that is

supportive and he says, ‘ a very strong belief that I have to take the team with me on the journey of success’.

He gives a rich picture of the process and arrangements made to frame and set the tone for this event. He draws on Morgan’s (1997) work on focus groups to support his method and McNiff *et al.*’s (1996) work on action research to demonstrate that his approach is concerned with ‘improving practice in his workplace’, see pg 97. In presenting his account of research-based practice, Nigel offers us an insight into a very natural process that he is developing as he shares with us this reflection:

“I remember that it did not feel like a formal meeting at all but as a group of individuals holding a conversation about something that was important to all parties”.

Using a pragmatic management template to record his data, he later identifies key words and themes from it drawing out a ‘needs analysis’ as described on page 113 which highlights areas of need / attention in communication, performance, team learning and leadership. Following the focus group there was a communication event by each manager with their immediate teams and Nigel outlines his plans in his conclusion for a continuing ‘active listening’ approach in his work with people in the organisation, in particular, he outlines his plans to follow up the coming employee opinion survey and a process of continuous growth for me, us and them. The conduct of Nigel’s research approach is clearly fit for purpose in that it responds to a shortcoming identified in secondary data, which is followed through by way of a focus group (new primary data) and a strategy / action plan for continuous practice improvement” (Extracts from my tutor assessment report).

**So what are the ethical issues that Nigel is working through and emerging for him in his dissertation?**

1. There is recognition that employees have been used and treated in the past as ‘human resources’. Based on his experience of facing redundancy, he knows as a result of his own experience, that employees, no matter how effective and loyal, are expendable and that the psychological contract does not look after the employees interests in the event of major change and job reductions. What is Nigel doing about it? It would seem from the evidence that he provides that Nigel has adopted a humanistic stance toward the relationship between him as leader and the employees whom he has responsibility for by ensuring that the psychological contract is based on a greater degree of equity. To this end, he favours a leadership style that

supports coaching and personal development, so that in the event of future change those employees are more equipped to find alternative employment in side or outside of the bank. These are important pragmatic issues where organisations cannot guarantee jobs for life and which goes to the heart of the psychological contract. Explicit recognition by employers of such issues would be exemplars of good practice in 'human resources' in the employment relationship.

2. Nigel's overall approach is one of stakeholding. Appreciating that employees have as stakeholders in the firm, rights and expectations that go beyond a utilitarian approach to employee relations. Nigel's stance in the face of 'Value Based Management' is to go beyond the bottom line, enacting through his leadership a process of social accounting and not just one that is based on profit. As the EBEN (European Business Ethics Network) conference at Cambridge September 2000 suggested, going 'beyond the bottom line' is a mark of good practice in a contemporary approach to business ethics. That he recognises that the employees have 'overlapping' stakeholders interests as employees of the bank, shareholders, and as citizens, is also significant in that his 'critical approach to action' has an impact beyond the firm, to society, facilitating the long term prospects of these employees as employable citizens who ultimately can continue to contribute to the wealth of the nation. His action, inviting his managers to engage in a focus group to understand better what the employees need of him and them, towards a leadership style of shared vision, is evidence that he is prepared to act on his espoused values.

## **Conclusions**

In this paper, I have sought to draw out a case for critical action learning as a vehicle for the teaching of business ethics as it enables student managers to draw out their learning from real live work based issues that go to the heart of the matter asking the question 'What is the nature of the ethical problem here and what can I do about it'?

It is a teaching and learning strategy that is a challenging process to both tutors and students alike, demanding a stakeholder approach to the teaching and learning relationship. Critical action learning locates the work of managers beyond the organisational context thus potentially benefiting society at large. The course promotes a stakeholder approach to action research drawing on the work of Reason

and Marshall (1987) who identify three key stakeholders, the first being 'for me' the personal process in action research as exemplified by Nigel in his journey as manager towards an ethics of practice; 'for us', in Nigel's case, the us being his organisation and his subordinates; and finally, 'for them' in this case the academy as his work contributes to enhancing the body of knowledge.

As an approach critical action learning and action research with people and organisations requires a degree of 'maturity' in order to bear critique of one's practice, demanding the development of self-reflective skills in management practice.

Like any teaching strategy the proof of the pudding is in the eating and I would suggest that the quality of insight, action and change brought about in the student project illustrates the quality of their learning and thus their ability to facilitate an ethic of practice.

If the crux of teaching business ethics through critical action learning requires the exercise of moral judgment, then the example of the student project offered, I suggest, demonstrates the development of a practitioner in working out his position and purposes in relation to his practice context.

## References

- Anthony, P. (1998) Management Education: Ethics versus Morality (chapter 13) in Parker, M. (1998) Ethics and Organizations, Sage
- Boud, D. (1988) Second Edition. Developing Student Autonomy in Learning, Kogan Page, London.
- Clarkson, P. (1995) change In Organisations, Whurr, London.
- Freire, P. (1985) The Politics of Education, Culture, Power and Liberation, Macmillan, Bergin and Gurvey, New York.
- Goleman, D. (2000) 'Leadership that gets results', Harvard Business Review, Pearson (in Stone (2001)
- Heron, J. (1989) The Facilitators Handbook, Kogan Page, London.
- Knowles, M. (1985) Andragogy in Action, Jossey Bass, San Francisco
- Lewin, R and Regine, B. (1999) The Soul at Work: Unleashing the power of complexity science for Business Success. Orion Books, London (in Stone (2001).
- Logan, A. and Stuart, R. 'Action Based Learning: Are Activity and Experience The Same?' In Industrial and Commercial Training, March-April
- Marshall, J (2001) Self Reflective Inquiry Practices (chapter 44) in Handbook of Action Research: Participative Inquiry and Practice, Reason and Bradbury (2001), Sage, London.
- McNiff, J. Lomax, P. Whitehead, J. (1996) You and Your Action Research Project, Hyde Publications, London (in Stone (2001)
- Morgan, D.L. (1997) Focus Groups As Qualitative Research, Sage, London (in Stone (2001).

Reason, P. and Marshall, J. (1987)'Research as a Personal Process' in Boud and Griffin in *Appreciating Adult Learning From The Learners Perspective*, Kogan Page, London, pp.112-126.

Revans, R.W. (1982) *The Origins and Growth of Action Learning*, Chartwell Bratt, Bromley.

Rogers, C. (1967) *On Becoming A Person: a Therapist's View of Psychology*, Constable, London.

Rogers, C. (1983) *The Freedom To Learn for the 80s*, Merrill.

Rowan, J. *The Humanistic Approach to Action Research* (chapter 10, 114-123) in *Handbook of Action Research: Participative inquiry and practice*, Reason and Bradbury (2001), Sage, London.

Rowan, J (1981) in Rowan and Reason, P. (1981) *Human Inquiry: A Source Book of New Paradigm Research*, Wiley, Chichester.

Schön, D. (1983) *The Reflective Practitioner*, New York Basic Books

Schön, D. (1987) *Educating The Reflective Practitioner*, Jossey Bass

Senge, P. Kleiner, A. Roberts, C. Ross, RB. Smith, BJ. (1994) *The Fifth Discipline Field Book*, Nicholas Brealey publishing, London, (in Stone (2001)).

Sorell, T. (1988) *Beyond The Fringe? The Strange State of Business Ethics* (chapter2), in *Ethics and Organizations* ibid

Stone, N. (2001) *Journey of An Active Listener: Dissertation submitted for the MA in Personal and Organisational Development*, Middlesex University Business School.

Vince, R. and Martin, L (1993) *Inside Action Learning: An Exploration of the Psychology And The Politics of the Action Learning Model*. In *Management Education and Development* volume 24 part 3, 205-215.

Weinstein, K. (1995) *Action Learning: A Journey of Discovery and Development*, Harper Collins, London.

Whitehead, J. (1993) *The Growth of Educational Knowledge; creating your own living educational theories*, Bournemouth Hyde publications

Whitehead, J. (1989) 'Creating a living educational theory from questions of the kind, 'How do I improve my practice?' in *Cambridge Journal of Education*, 19 (1) 41 – 52

Whitehead, J. (2000) 'How Do I Improve My Practice? Creating and legitimating an epistemology of practice. In *Reflective Practice* volume 1. Number1, Taylor and Frances, Abingdon, Oxfordshire.

Winstanley, D. and Woodall, J. (2000) *ethical Issues in Contemporary Human Resource Management*, Macmillan Business, Hampshire and London.

Willmott, H (1994:105 to 136) *Management Education: Provocations to a debate in Management Learning* volume 25 no1. Sage, London.

Willmott, H (1998) *Towards a New Ethics? The Contributions of Poststructuralism and Posthumanism* (chapter 5), in *Ethics and Organizations*, Parker, M, (1998) Sage



## **APPENDIX 2**

### **INSTRUCTIONS FOR USE OF THE CD-R**

#### **Viewing The CD-R Files**

The purpose of this appendix is to provide instructions for the use and viewing of the CD-R files, which are intended to provide an alternative and complementary form of visual representation to the narrative contained in Chapter Nine.<sup>115</sup> You may wish to read the narrative accounts first and then view the accompanying CD-R files, or view them at the points highlighted and return to the accompanying narrative later.

There are three CD-R files: file 1, file 2 and file 3.

#### **To view file 1: named “Louise’s check-in”**

Click onto the CD-R and prepare to view parts 1 to 3. The clip is in three parts. To begin, click onto “Louise’s check-in part 1”, where you will hear Louise checking in very briefly (approximately 20 seconds), after which Margaret begins her check-in. Margaret’s check-in continues in parts 2 and 3.

#### **To view file 2: named “Louise’s Dissertation”**

Click onto the CD-R and prepare to view parts 1 to 3. Part 1 begins with Margaret asking Louise to clarify her intentions regarding a proposed future search intervention. In parts 2 and 3, I can be heard summing up feedback that I

---

<sup>115</sup> Entitled “Developing a connoisseur’s eye: exploring the aesthetics of my teaching and learning relationships on MAPOD”.

and another tutor have prepared for Louise on her draft dissertation, with the intention of helping her bring further clarity to her account

The second series of clips on this file are named “section two parts 4 and 5”. Click onto part 4, where I can be heard framing a question to Louise about when she first noticed that her inquiry had taken a reflective turn, linking the personal to her organisational research. Continue viewing parts 4 and 5 to see how this opens up a different perspective in the conversation of the learning set.

**To view file 3: named “Marcia Change Agent”**

Click onto the CD-R and prepare to view parts 1 to 5. These clips provide an insight into the action learning set meeting with Marcia and Sue, in which Marcia is describing her work as a health visitor and exploring what it means for her to be a change agent in her daily role.

## REFERENCES AND BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Agyris, C. (1990). *Overcoming Organisational Defenses: Facilitating Organisational Learning*, Prentice Hall: Englewood Cliffs, NJ.
- Alveson, M. and Willmott, H. (1996). *Making Sense of Management: a Critical Introduction*, Sage: London.
- Anderson, H. and Goolishian, H. (1992). "The client is the expert: a not knowing approach to therapy". In: McNamee, S. and Gergen, K.J. (eds.), *Therapy As Social Construction*, Sage: London.
- Anderson, H. and Swim, S. (1993). "Learning as collaborative conversation: combining the student's and teacher's expertise". In: "Special issue: voices from the training context", *J. Human Systems: The Journal of Systemic Consultation and Management*, 4, 145-160
- Anthony, P. (1998). "Management education: ethics versus morality". In: Parker, M. (1998). *Ethics and Organizations*, Sage: London, pp.269-281.
- Arendt, H. (1963). *Eichman in Jerusalem: a Report on the Banality of Evil*, Penguin Books: London.
- Ashcroft, K. and Foreman-Peck, L. (1994). *Managing Teaching and Learning in Further and Higher Education*, Falmer Press: London.
- Bateson, G. and Mead, M. (1942). *Balinese Character: A Photographic Analysis*, New York Academy of Science: New York.
- Bauman, Z. (1996). *Modernity and the Holocaust*, Blackwell Publishing: Oxford.
- Belenky, M.F., Clinchy, B.M., Goldberger, N.R. and Tarule, J.M. (1986). *Women's Ways of Knowing: The Development of Self, Voice and Mind*, Basic Books: New York.

Belenky, M.F. (1996). "Public homeplaces: nurturing the development of people, families, and communities". In: Goldberger, N., Tarule, J., Clinchy, B. and Belenky, M. (1996). *Knowledge, Difference and Power: Essays Inspired by Women's Ways of Knowing*, Basic Books: New York, Chapter 13, pp.393-430.

BERA (2003). *Revised BERA Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research*, e-mail: admin.bera@btclick.com.

Biggs, J.B. (1989). "Approaches to the enhancement of tertiary teaching", *Higher Education Resource and Development*, **8**, 7-25.

Bolingbroke, S. (2000). *From POD Child to Adult Academy*, Unpublished MAPOD dissertation, Middlesex University Business School.

Boud, D. (1981). *Developing Student Autonomy in Learning*, Kogan Page: London.

Boud, D. (1988). *Developing Student Autonomy in Learning*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn., Kogan Page: London.

Boud, D. (2002). "An unexamined life is not the life for learning: rethinking assessment for life long learning", Professorial Inaugural Lecture, 30 January 2002, Middlesex University School of Life Long Learning, Trent Park, London.

Boud, D. and Griffin, V. (eds.), *Appreciating Adult Learning*, Kogan Page: London.

Brooks, A. (2001). "Restructuring bodies of knowledge". In: Brooks, A. and Mackinnon, A. (eds.) *Gender and the Restructured University*, The Society for Research Into Higher Education & Open University Press: Buckingham.

Brooks, A. and Mackinnon, A. (eds.), *Gender and the Restructured University*, The Society for Research into Higher Education & Open University Press: Buckingham.

Carr, W. and Kemmis, S. (1986). *Becoming Critical: Education, Knowledge and Action Research*, Falmer Press: Lewes.

Cavafy, C. (1984). *Collected Poems*, translated by Keely, E. and Sherrad, P., Savidis, G. (ed.), Hogarth: London.

Clarkson, P. (1995). *Change in Organisations*, Whurr: London.

Clinchy, B.M. (1989). "The development of thoughtfulness in college women: integrating reason and care", *American Behavioural Scientist*, **32**, 647-657.

Cline, S. and Spender, D. (1987). *Reflecting Men at Twice Their Natural Size*, Andrew Deutsch: London.

Coleman, M. and Briggs, A.R.J., *Research Methods in Educational Leadership and Management*, Paul Chapman Publishing/Sage: London.

Collins, U.M. and McNiff, J. (eds.), *Rethinking Pastoral Care*, Routledge: London. [www.jeanmcniff.com/armethododcare.html](http://www.jeanmcniff.com/armethododcare.html) 10-6-03.

Corey, S. (1949). "Action research, fundamental research and educational practices", *Teachers College Record*, **50**, 509-514.

Coulter, D. (1999). "The epic and the novel: dialogism and teacher research", *Educational Researcher*, **28**(3), 4-13.

Coulter, D. and Wiens, J.R. (2002). "Educational judgment: linking the actor and the spectator", *Educational Researcher*, **31**(4), 15-25.

Davis, M. (2003). "Barriers to reflective practice: the changing nature of higher education", *Active Learning in Higher Education*, **4**(3), 243-255.

Denzin, N.K. (1994). "The art and politics of interpretation". In: Denzin N.K. and Lincoln, Y.S. (1994). *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, Sage: London, pp.500-515.

Denzin N.K. and Lincoln, Y.S. (1994). *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, Sage: London.

Eames, K. (1993). "A dialectical form of action research-based educational knowledge: a teacher researcher's view, conversation one" In: Ghaye, T. and Wakefield, P. (eds.) (1993). *The Role of Self In Action Research*, C.A.R.N. *Critical Conversations: A Trilogy, Book One*, Hyde Publications: Bournemouth.

Eisner, E. (1997). "The promise and perils of alternative data representation", *Educational Researcher*, **26**(6), 4-10.

Elbow, P. (1973). *Writing Without Teachers*, Oxford University Press: London.

Elliott, Y. and Adelman, C. (1973). "Reflecting where the action is: the design of the Ford teaching project", *Education for Teaching*, **92**, 8-20.

Erben, M. (ed.), *Biography and Education a Reader, Social Research and Educational Studies Series, 19*, Falmer Press: London.

Feldman, A. (2003). "Validity and quality in self-study", *Educational Researcher*, **32**(3), 26-28.

Feltham, C. (2000). "Counselling supervision: baselines, problems and possibilities". In: Lawton, B. and Feltham, C. (eds.), *Taking Supervision Forward Enquiries and Trends in Counselling and Psychotherapy*, Sage: London.

Fineman, S. (1993). *Emotion in Organisations*, Sage: London.

Foucault, M. (1988). "The ethic of care for the self as a practice of freedom". An interview translated by Gauthier, J.D. in: Bernauer, J. and Rasmussen, D. (eds.), *The Final Foucault*, The MIT Press: London.

Fox, L. (2002). *A Practitioner's Insight Into Future Search, a Technique for Managing Change*, unpublished MAPOD dissertation, Middlesex University Business School.

Frame, P. and Hartog, M. (2003). "From rhetoric to reality. Into the swamp of ethical practice: implementing work-life balance", *Business Ethics a European Review*, **12**(4), 358-368, Blackwell Publishing: Oxford.

Freire, P. (1972). *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Penguin: Harmondsworth, London.

Freire, P. (1985). *The Politics of Education, Culture, Power and Liberation*, Bergin & Garvey: New York.

French, R. and Grey, C. (1996). *Rethinking Management Education*, Sage: London.

Ghaye, T. (2000). "Empowerment through reflection: is this the case of the emperor's new clothes?". In: Ghaye, T., Gillespie, D. and Lilyman, S. (eds.) (2000). *Empowerment Through Reflection: The narratives of healthcare professionals*, Mark Allen Publishing: Wiltshire, Chapter 5, pp.64-92.

Ghaye, T. and Wakefield, P. (eds.) (1993). *The Role of Self In Action Research, C.A.R.N. Critical Conversations: A Trilogy, Book One*, Hyde Publications: Bournemouth.

Ghaye, T., Gillespie, D. and Lilyman, S. (eds.) (2000). *Empowerment Through Reflection: The narratives of healthcare professionals*, Mark Allen Publishing: Wiltshire.

Gibson, R. (1985). "Critical times for action research", *Cambridge Journal of Education*, 15(1), 59-64.

Gilligan, C. (1977). "In a different voice: women's conception of self and morality", *Harvard Educational Review*, 47, 481-517.

Gilligan, C. (1982). *In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development*. Harvard University Press: Cambridge, Massachusetts and London.

Gitlin, A. (ed.) *Power and Method: Political Activism and Educational Research*, Routledge: London.

Goldberg, N. (1986). *Writing Down the Bones*, Shambala: London.

Goldberger, N., Tarule, J., Clinchy, B. and Belenky, M. (eds.) (1996). *Knowledge, Difference and Power: Essays Inspired by Women's Ways of Knowing*, Basic Books: New York.

Goldthorpe, J., Lockwood, D., Bechofer, F. and Platt, J. (1968). *The Affluent Worker: Industrial Attitudes and Behaviours*, Cambridge University Press: Cambridge.

Grumet, M.R. (1991). "The politics of personal knowledge". In: Witherell, C. and Noddings, N. (eds.) (1991). *Stories Lives Tell: Narrative and Dialogue Education*, The Teachers College Press: New York.

Harper, D. (1994). "On the authority of the image: visual methods at the crossroads". In: Denzin, N.K. and Lincoln, Y.S., *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, Sage: London.

Harrison, R. (1987). *Organisation Culture and Quality of Service: a Strategy for Releasing Love in the Workplace*, Association for Management Education and Development: London.

Harrison, R. (1995). *Consultant's Journey: a Professional and Personal Odyssey*,. McGraw Hill, Developing Organizations Series: London.

Hartill, G. (1998). "The web of words" In: Hunt, C. and Sampson, F. (eds.) (1998). *The Self on The Page :The Theory and Practice of Creative Writing in Personal Development*, Jessica Kingsley Publishers: London.

Hartog, M. (1992). "A problem at work: the problem of developing self directed learners on the part time MA Human Resource Management course", unpublished paper, University of Lancaster.

Hartog, M. (1994). "Releasing capability through action learning". Unpublished paper presented to The Capability Through Business Studies conference held at Middlesex University, 4 April.

Hartog, M. (1996a). Letter to colleague, MAPOD 1.

Hartog, M. (1996b). "A life story". Unpublished paper submitted to CARPP, March.

Hartog, M. (1997). Diploma transfer paper, unpublished, submitted to the Centre for Action Research in Professional Practice, University of Bath.

Hartog, M. (2000a). "Becoming a reflective practitioner". Unpublished paper presented to the First International Reflective Practice Conference, Worcester, July.

Hartog, M. (2000b). "Finding voice in the academy". M.Phil. transfer paper submitted to Centre for Action Research in Professional Practice, University of Bath, September.



Hartog, M. (2002a). "Becoming a reflective practitioner: a continuing professional development strategy through humanistic action research", *Business Ethics: a European Review*, 11(3), 233-243, Blackwell Publishing: Oxford.

Hartog, M. (2002b). "Critical action learning: teaching business ethics". Paper written and presented to the EBEN UK Conference Teaching Business Ethics: Perspectives on Best Practice, City University, 1 June 2002.

Hartog, M. (2002c). "Maternal thinking. A legitimate discourse for educational practice: making a difference", unpublished paper presented to 2<sup>nd</sup> Carfax International Conference on Reflective Practice, July 2002.

Hartog, M. (forthcoming 2004). "Educating the reflective educator". In: Reynolds, M. and Vince, R. (eds.) (2004). *Organizing Reflection*, Ashgate Publishing: Aldershot.

Hartog, M. and Winstanley, D. (2002). "Ethics and human resource management"; "Professional development and practice", "Business and professional ethics". Selected Papers from the 2001 International Conference on Ethics and HRM. Special issue: *Professional Development and Practice*, 21(2), 3-10.

Hearn, J. (2001). "Academia, management and men: making the connections, exploring the implications". In: Brooks, A. and Mackinnon, A. (eds.), *Gender and the Restructured University*, The Society for Research into Higher Education and Open University Press: Buckingham.

Heron, J. (1989). *The Facilitator's Handbook*, Kogan Page: London.

Heron, J. (1992). *Feeling and Personhood: Psychology in Another Key*, Sage: London.

Hillman, J. (1975). *Revisioning Psychology*, Harper Colophon: New York.

Hillman, J. (1996). *The Soul's Code: In Search of Character and Calling*, Bantam/Kingdom House: London.

hooks, B. (1991). *Yearning: Race, Gender and Cultural Politics*, Turnaround Books: London.

Hunt, C. and Sampson, F. (eds.) (1998). *The Self on The Page :The Theory and Practice of Creative Writing in Personal Development*, Jessica Kingsley Publishers: London.

Kaberry, S. (2000). "Abuse in supervision" In: Lawton, B. and Feltham, C. (eds.), *Taking Supervision Forward Enquiries and Trends in Counselling and Psychotherapy*, Sage: London, Chapter 3, pp.42-59.

Kegan, R. (1994). *In Over Our Heads: The Mental Demands of Modern Life*, Harvard University Press: Cambridge, Massachusetts.

Kemmis, S. (2001). "Exploring the relevance of critical theory for action research: emancipatory action research in the footsteps of Jurgen Habermas". In: Reason, P. and Bradbury, H. (eds.) (2001). *Handbook of Action Research: Participative Inquiry and Practice*, Sage: London, Chapter 8, pp.91-102.

Kim, H. (1999). "Critical reflective inquiry for knowledge development in nursing practice", *Nursing Practice*, **29**(5), 1205-1212.

Knowles, M. (1984). *The Modern Practice of Adult Education: From Pedagogy to Andragogy*, Follet: Chicago.

Knowles, M. (1985). *Andragogy in Action*, Jossey Bass: San Francisco.

Kolb, D. (1984). *Experiential Learning – Experience as the Source of Learning and Development*, Englewood Cliffs: London.

Lather, P. (1994). "Fertile obsession: validity after poststructuralism". In: Gitlin, A. (ed.) *Power and Method: Political Activism and Educational Research*, Routledge: London.

Lawton, B. and Feltham, C. (eds.), *Taking Supervision Forward Enquiries and Trends in Counselling and Psychotherapy*, Sage: London.

Lewin, K. (1946). "Action research and minority problems", *Journal of Social Studies*, **2**(4), 34-46.

Lewin, R. and Regine, B. (1999). *The Soul at Work: Unleashing the Power of Complexity Science for Business Success*, Orion Books: London.

Logan, A. and Stuart, R. (1987). "Action based learning: are activity and experience the same?". *Industrial and Commercial Training*, March-April 1987.

Lomax, P. (1986). "Action researchers' action research: a symposium", *British Journal of In-Service Education*, **13**, 42-50.

Lomax, P. (1994). "The Narrative of an Educational Journey or Crossing the Track", Professorial Inaugural Lecture, School of Education, Kingston University.

Lomax, P. (1999). "The significance of action research and self study for evidence based professionalism and the development of community". Paper presented at BERA NEI Seminar, Research Based Professionalism and Educational Action Research, University of Bath, 20 March 1999.

Lomax, P. (2002). "Action research". In: Coleman, M. and Briggs, A.R.J., *Research Methods in Educational Leadership and Management*, Paul Chapman, Sage: London, Chapter 8, pp.122-140.

Lyotard, Y-F. (1984). *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, Manchester University Press: Manchester.

MacDonald, B.J. (1995). *Theory as a Prayerful Act: The Collected Essays of James B. MacDonald*, Counterpoints 22, Peter Lang: New York.

MacIntyre, A. (1990). "Re-conceiving the university as an institution and the lecturer as a genre". In: A. MacIntyre (1990). *Three Rival Versions of Moral Inquiry*, Duckworth: Kings Lynn, pp.216-236.

Maguire, P. (2001). "Uneven ground: feminisms and action research". In: Reason, P. and Bradbury, H. (eds.), *Handbook of Action Research: Participative Inquiry and Practice*, Sage: London, Chapter 5, pp.59-69.

Maher, F.A. and Tetreault, M.K. (1996), "Women's ways of knowing in women's studies, feminist pedagogies and feminist theories". In: Goldberger, N., Tarule, J., Clinchy, B. and Belenky, M. (eds.) (1996). *Knowledge, Difference and Power: Essays Inspired by Women's Ways of Knowing*, Basic Books: New York, Chapter 5, pp.148-174.

Mann, S.J. (1992). "Telling a life story: issues for research", *Management Education and Development*, **23**(3), 271-280.

Marshall, J. (1981). "Making sense as a personal process". In: Reason, P. and Rowan, J. (1981). *Human Inquiry: a Source Book of New Paradigm Research*, Wiley: Chichester, Chapter 34, pp.395-400.

Marshall, J. (2001). "Self reflective inquiry practices". In: Reason, P. and Bradbury, B. (eds.) (2001). *Handbook of Action Research: Participative Inquiry and Practice*, Sage: London, Chapter 44, pp.433-439.

McMahon, T. (1999). "Is reflective practice synonymous with action research?", *Educational Action Research*, **7**, 163-170.

McNamee, S. and Gergen, K.J. (eds.), *Therapy As Social Construction*, Sage: London.

McNiff, J. (1988). *Action Research: Principles and Practice*, Routledge: London.

McNiff, J. (1999). "Action research, a methodology of care". In: Collins, U.M. and McNiff, J. (eds.), *Rethinking Pastoral Care*, Routledge: London. [www.jeanmcniff.com/armethododcare.html](http://www.jeanmcniff.com/armethododcare.html) [10-6-03].

McNiff, J., Lomax, P. and Whitehead, J. (1996). *You and Your Action Research Project*, Hyde Publications: London.

McPhail, K. (2001). "The other objective of ethics education: re-humanising the accounting profession - a study of ethics education in law, engineering, medicine and accountancy", *The Journal of Business Ethics*, **34**(3-4), 279-298.

Mingers, J. (2000). "What is it to be critical?", *Management Learning*, **31**(12), 219-237.

Mitroff, I. and Kilman, R. (1978). *Integrating Divergent Concepts and Theories*, Jossey Bass: San Francisco.

Morgan, D.L. (1997). *Focus Groups As Qualitative Research*, Sage: London.

Noddings, N. (1984). *Caring*, University of California Press: Berkley, California.

Oakley, A. (2001). "Foreword". In: Brooks, A. and Mackinnon, A. (eds.), *Gender and the Restructured University*, The Society for Research into Higher Education & Open University Press: Buckingham.

Parker, M. (1998). *Ethics and Organizations*, Sage: London.

Parker, M. and Jary, D. (1995). "The McUniversity: organisation, management and academic subjectivity", *Organisation*, 2(2), 319-318.

Parker, Z. (1998). "PhD students and the auto/biographies of their learning". In: Erben, M. (ed.), *Biography and Education a Reader, Social Research and Educational Studies Series, 19*, Falmer Press: London, Chapter 9, pp.116-129.

Perry, W.G. (1970). *Forms of Intellectual and Ethical Development in College Years*, Holt, Rinehart and Winston: New York.

Perry, M. (2001). *Penguins That Look Up, May Fall Over*, unpublished MAPOD dissertation, Middlesex University Business School.

Polanyi, M. (1962). *Personal Knowledge: Toward a Post-Critical Philosophy*, Routledge: London.

Prosser (1998). *Image-based Research*, Falmer: London.

Pye, A. (1994). "Past, present and possibility: an integrative appreciation of learning from experience", *Management Learning*, 25(1), 155-173.

Reason, P. (1981). "Methodological approaches to social science, by Ian Mitroff and Ralph Kilman, editorial appreciation". In: Reason, P. and Rowan, J. (eds.), *Human Inquiry: a Sourcebook of New Paradigm Research*, Wiley: Chichester, Chapter 4, pp.43-52.

Reason, P. (1988). *Human Inquiry in Action: Developments in New Paradigm Research*, Sage: London.

Reason, P. and Bradbury, H. (eds.) (2001). *Handbook of Action Research: Participative Inquiry and Practice*, Sage: London.

Reason, P. and Hawkins, P. (1988). "Story telling as inquiry". In: Reason, P. (ed.) (1988). *Human Inquiry in Action: Developments in New Paradigm Research*, Sage: London, Chapter 4, pp.79-101.

Reason, P. and Marshall, J. (1987). "Research as a personal process". In: Boud, D. and Griffin, V. (eds.), *Appreciating Adult Learning*, Kogan Page: London, pp.112-126.

Reason, P. and Marshall, J. (2001). "On working with graduate research students". In: Reason, P. and Bradbury, H. (eds.), *Handbook of Action Research; Participative Inquiry and Practice*, Sage: London, Chapter 2, pp.413-419.

Reason, P. and Rowan, J. (1981). *Human Inquiry: a Source Book of New Paradigm Research*, Wiley: Chichester.

Reed, A. (1993). "The reflecting team in a systemic therapy training context: a vehicle for connected teaching, in special issue: voices from the training context", *J. Human Systems: The Journal of Systemic Consultation and Management*, 4, 213-233.

Revans, R. (1971). *Developing Effective Managers*, Longman: Harlow.

Revans, R. (1982). *The Origins and Growth of Action Learning*, Chartwell Bratt: Bromley.

Reynolds, M. and Vince, R. (eds.) (2004). *Organizing Reflection*, Ashgate Publishing: Aldershot.

Rhem, J. (2003). "Mindfulness and teaching". *National Teaching and Learning Forum Newsletter*, 12(2) article 17. Oryx Press in association with James Rhem & Associate, Inc. [www.ntlf.com](http://www.ntlf.com)

Richardson, L. (1994). "Writing a method of inquiry". In: Denzin, N.K. and Lincoln, Y.S. (eds.), *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, Sage: London, Chapter 32, pp.516-529.

Rogers, C. (1967). *On Becoming a Person: a Therapist's View of Psychotherapy*, Constable: London.

Rogers, C. (1983). *Freedom to Learn For the 80s*, Merrill, Macmillan: New York.

Rosenfeld, J.M. and Tardieu, B. (2000). *Artisans of Democracy: How Ordinary People, Families in Extreme Poverty, and Social Institutions Become Allies to Overcome Social Exclusion*, University Press of America: Lanham, New York.

Rowan, J. (1981). "A dialectical paradigm for research". In: Rowan, J. and Reason, P. (1981). *Human Inquiry: A Source Book of New Paradigm Research*, Wiley: Chichester, Chapter 9, pp.93-112.

Rowan, J. (2001). "The humanistic approach to action research". In: Reason, P. and Bradbury, H. (2001). *The Handbook of Action Research: Participative Inquiry and Practice*, Sage: London, Chapter 10, pp.114-123.

Rowan, J. and Reason, P. (1981). *Human Inquiry: a Source Book of New Paradigm Research*, Wiley: Chichester.

Rowland, S. (1993). *The Enquiring Tutor*, Falmer Press.

Rowland, S. (2000). *The Enquiring University Teacher*, Open University Press: Buckingham.

Ruddick, S. (1980). "Maternal thinking", *Feminist Studies*, 6, 70-96.

Ruddick, S. (1989). *Maternal Thinking: Towards A Politics of Peace*, The Women's Press: London.

Ruddick, S. (1996). "Reason's 'femininity': a case for connected knowing". In Goldberger, N., Tarule, J., Clinchy, B. and Belenky, M. (1996). *Knowledge, Difference and Power: Essays Inspired by Women's Ways of Knowing*, Basic Books: New York, Chapter 8, pp.248-273.

Schön, D. (1983). *The Reflective Practitioner*, Basic Books: New York.

Schön, D. (1987). *Educating the Reflective Practitioner*, Jossey Bass: San Francisco and Oxford.

Schwandt, T.A. (1994). "Constructivist, interpretivist approaches to human inquiry". In: Denzin, N.K. and Lincoln, Y.S. (eds.), *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, Sage: London, Chapter 7, pp.118-137.

Schweickart, P. (1996). "Speech is silver, silence is gold: the asymmetrical intersubjectivity of communicative action". In: Goldberger, N., Tarule, J., Clinchy, B. and Belenky, M. (1996). *Knowledge, Difference and Power: Essays Inspired by Women's Ways of Knowing*, Basic Books: New York, Chapter 10, pp.305-334.

Scott Peck, M. (1987). *The Different Drum: the Creation of True Community – the First Step to World Peace*, Arrow: London.

Selvini, M. (1980). "Hypothesising, circularity and neutrality: three guidelines for the conductor of the session", *Family Process*, **19**(1), 3-12.

Senge, P., Kleiner, A., Roberts, C., Ross, R.B. and Smith, B.J. (1994). *The Fifth Discipline Field Book*, Nicholas Brealey Publishing: London.

Shaul, R. (1972). *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Penguin Books: London.

Shulman, L. (2000). "From minsk to pinsk: why a scholarship of teaching and learning?", *Journal of Scholarship of Teaching and Learning*, **1**(1), 48-52.

Sorell, T. (1988). "Beyond the fringe? The strange state of business ethics". In: Parker, M. (1998). *Ethics and Organizations*, Sage: London, Chapter 2, pp.15-29.

Stone, N. (2001). *Journey of an Active Listener*, unpublished MAPOD dissertation, Middlesex University Business School.

Stroier, V. (1993). "Benchmarking the systemic way: how to learn from the best ideas around. Training in a consultation frame and consultation in a training frame", *Human Systems: The Journal of Systemic Consultation and Management*, **4**, 311-330.

Torbert, W. (1991). *The Power of Balance*, Sage: London.

Udipati, M. (2001). *The Butterfly Emerges; a Personal Action Inquiry*, unpublished MAPOD dissertation, Middlesex University Business School.



Usher, R. (1998). "The story of self: education, experience and autobiography". In: Erben, M. (ed.), *Biography and Education: a Reader, Social Research and Educational Studies Series 19*, Falmer Press: London, Chapter 2, pp.18-31.

Usher, R., Bryant, I. and Johnston, R. (2001). *Adult Education and the Postmodern Challenge: Leading Beyond The Limits*, Routledge, Falmer, Taylor & Francis: London.

Vince, R. and Martin, L. (1993). "Inside action learning: an exploration of the psychology and politics of the action learning model", *Management Education and Development*, **24**(3), 205-215.

Vince, R. (1996). "Experiential management education as the practice of change". In: French, R. and Grey, C. (1996). *Rethinking Management Education*, Sage: London.

Waldegrave, C. and Tamasese, K. (1994). "Some central ideas in the 'just therapy' approach". In: Special Issue "Poverty and Social Exclusion", Colgan McCarthy, I. (ed.), *Human Systems: The Journal of Systemic Consultation and Management*, **5** 191-208. Leeds Family Therapy and Research Centre and Kensington Consultation Centre.

Watson, J.S. and Wilcox, S. (2001). "Reading for understanding: methods of reflecting on practice", *Reflective Practice*, **1**(1), 57-68.

Webb, G. (1996). "Becoming critical of action research for development". In: Zuber-Skerritt, O. (ed.) (1996). *New Directions in Action Research*, Falmer Press: London, Chapter 9, pp.137-161.

Weinstein, K. (1995). *Action Learning: a Journey of Discovery and Development*, Harper Collins: London.

White, M. (1991). "Deconstruction and therapy", *Dulwich Centre Newsletter*, **3**, 21-40.

White, S. (2002). "Lies in truth and truth in lies: an in-depth study of a work place bullying scenario", *Business and Professional Ethics Journal*, **21**(2), 79-90.

Whitehead, J. (1993). *The Growth of Educational Knowledge: Creating Your Own Living Educational Theories, Collected Papers*, Hyde Publications: Bournemouth.

Whitehead, J. (1989). "Creating a living educational theory from questions of the kind, 'how do I improve my practice?'"', *Cambridge Journal of Education*, **19**(1), 41-52.

Whitehead, J. (1999). "Educative relations in a new era", *Pedagogy, Culture and Society*, **7**(1), 73-90.

Whitehead, J. (2000). "How do I improve my practice? creating and legitimating an epistemology of practice", *Reflective Practice*, **1**(1), 91-104.

Willmott, H. (1994). "Management education: provocations to a debate", *Management Learning*, **25**(1), 105-136.

Willmott, H. (1998). "Towards a new ethics? the contributions of poststructuralism and posthumanism". In: Parker, M. (1998). *Ethics and Organizations*, Sage: London, Chapter 3, pp.76-121.

Winnicott, D. (1971). *Playing and Reality*, Tavistock: London.

Winstanley, D. and Hartog, M. (2002). "Ethics and human resource management: introduction", *Business Ethics, a European Review*, **11**(3), 200-201, Blackwell Publishing: Oxford.

Winstanley, D. and Woodall, J. (2000). *Ethical Issues in Contemporary Human Resource Management*, Macmillan Business: London.

Winter, R. (1997). "Action research, universities, and 'theory'". Revised and abridged version of a talk originally presented at the annual CARN Conference, 1997. E-mail: r.j.winter@anglia.ac.uk

Winter, R. (1998). "Managers, spectators, and citizens: where does the theory come from in action research?", *Educational Action Research*, **6**(3), 361-376.

Witherell, C. and Noddings, N. (eds.) (1991). *Stories Lives Tell: Narrative and Dialogue in Education*, Teachers College Press: Columbia University, NY.

Zeichner, K.M. and Liston, D.P. (1996). *Reflective Teaching: an Introduction*, Lawrence Earlbaum Associates: New Jersey.

Zeichner, K.M. (1999). "The new scholarship in teacher education", *Educational Researcher*, 28(9), 4-14.

Zuber-Skerritt, O. (ed.) (1996). *New Directions in Action Research*, Falmer Press: London.